



# TOWARDS A NEW INDIA

TOWARDS A NEW IDEA



# Towards a New India

KARAN SINGH



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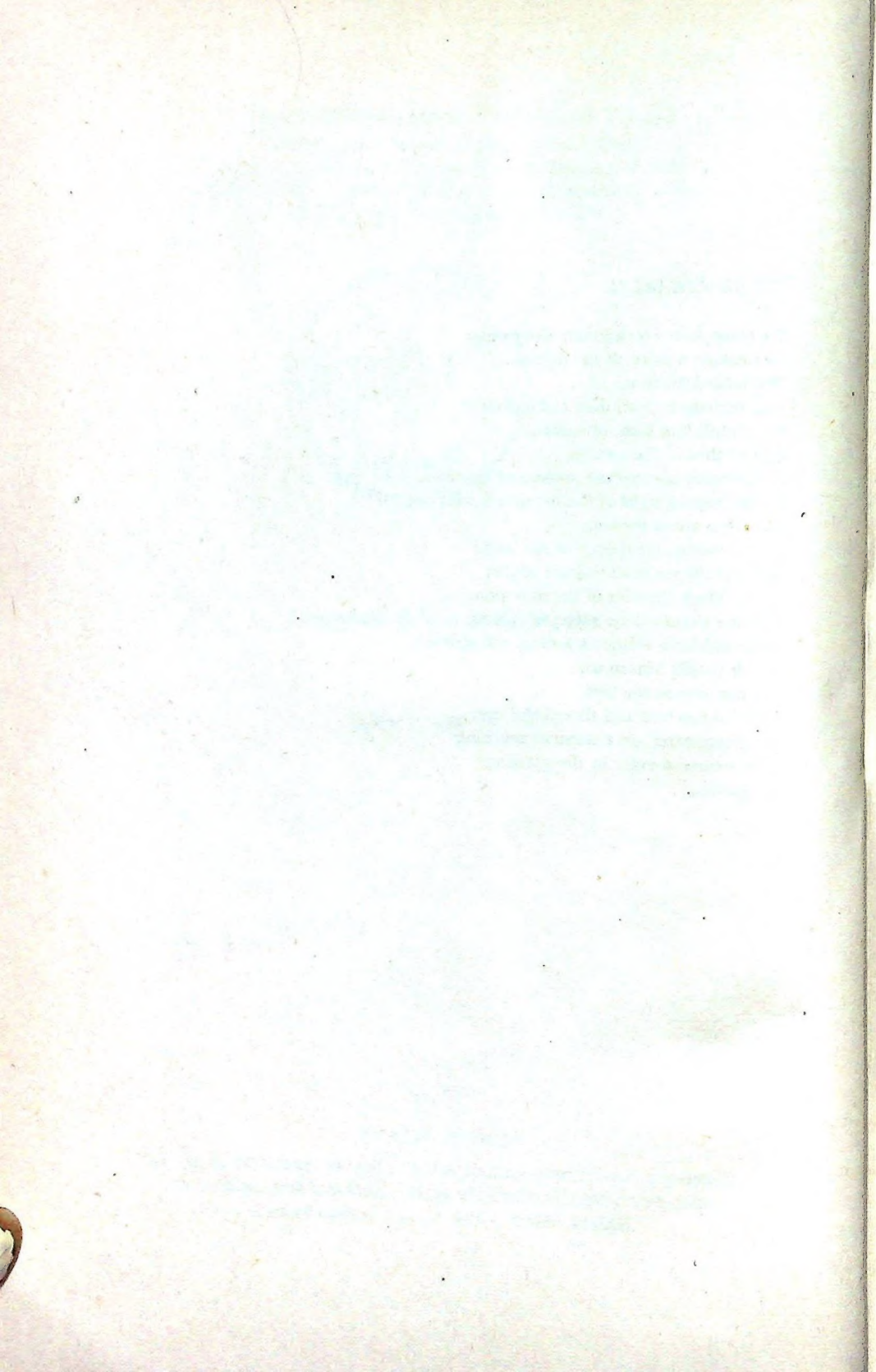


*TO JAWAHARLAL*

He disappeared on a summer morning,  
he became a voice in the garden.

We looked for him,  
passionately at first, then more deeply.  
We didn't find him, of course,  
except that in the garden,  
in the most unexpected nooks and crannies,  
in the leaping light of the mountain stream  
that runs along the top;  
in the sudden eloquence of the birds  
and the silence of the winter night;  
in the black thunder of the monsoon  
and the technicolour gaiety of spring,  
there suddenly arises an aroma, a fragrance,  
which recalls him to us.

We can almost see him,  
with his rosebud and thoughtful eyes.  
He disappeared on a summer morning  
and became a voice in the garden;  
his garden.





## Preface

The nation today is passing through a crisis of many dimensions, and if this is to be successfully overcome it is necessary that our response should also be multi-dimensional. The first aspect of the crisis, quite obviously, is economic. Events over the last few years, including the two years of unprecedented drought, the massive requirements of the Bangladesh refugees, the expenditure on the short and brilliant war against Pakistan, which was much heavier than most people realize, the massive increase in the international price of oil and petroleum products, as well as certain weaknesses in our own planning and economic policies, have combined to create an unprecedented economic crisis in the country. The most evident and glaring reflection of this crisis is the sharp rise in the price level, an increase that is often far beyond what can be justified on purely economic grounds. Thus the whole noxious network of hoarding, profiteering and blackmarketing adds considerably to the distress of the people at this difficult juncture.

In order to meet the economic crisis it will obviously be necessary, on the one hand, to make such improve-



ments in our economic policy as the needs of the situation demand, in particular to streamline and strengthen our steadily growing public sector and, on the other, to come down with a very firm hand on anti-social elements trading in the misery of the people, many of whom, ironically enough, occupy high places in society. To take just one example from a field with which I am, at present, directly associated, the inhuman trade in spurious drugs which jeopardize the lives of innocent people shows the depths to which some of our countrymen are prepared to sink in order to make quick profits. It is a tragedy too deep for tears that even after 27 years of independence such anti-national elements should still be flourishing. It is therefore essential to mobilize public opinion and administrative action to deal ruthlessly with them.

Another aspect which is deeply disturbing is this whole question of strikes and work stoppages. The protection and furtherance of the interests of industrial labour is a matter of considerable importance, because they constitute a vital and significant sector of our national life. But in a country with millions of unemployed or underemployed, the organized sector must not in all fairness make demands that would disrupt the economy. The real conflict today is not so much between the haves and the have-nots as between the have-somethings and the have-nothings, and it is quite clear that unless the organized labour fully realizes its responsibilities it will end up not only by harming the interests of the economy in general but also, in the final analysis, of its own members. With a population rapidly nearing 600 million and growing at the rate of one Australia (13 million) every year, it is imperative



that our economic policies must be production-oriented, with special emphasis on articles of mass consumption. Any activity which interferes with production or the movement of essential commodities is thus clearly against the national interest. Also, any government worth its salt will have to face frontally attempts to promote violence and lawlessness. These have been alarmingly on the increase of late, and though some of it can be explained away on grounds of economic frustration, it is clear that there are certain elements bent on disrupting and subverting all constitutional processes. There is no alternative but to deal with such elements firmly, at the same time mobilizing public opinion against extremism either of the right, the left, or simply of the *goondas*.

A third aspect of our economic problems revolves around our largely outmoded and rigid procedures, financial and administrative, and the continued dominance of a bureaucracy generally out of touch with the urges and aspirations of the new India. It is often forgotten that even demographically this is a young country with people born after independence now constituting about three-fifth of our entire population. The tremendous growth in governmental functions, especially in the economic and service fields, requires a basic restructuring of our governmental procedures, a much closer involvement of technical and managerial expertise in the whole system of administration, a much greater weightage to talent and dynamism rather than seniority. It is my feeling that despite several attempts, we have not yet been able to achieve a real breakthrough in this field, and this in turn is having a debilitating effect on our economic performance.

The second great dimension of the present crisis lies in the political field. In any country economics and politics are inextricably intertwined, and this is particularly true of developing countries like ours where vast millions still live precariously on or below the poverty line. With no cushioning to protect them against economic pressures, any adverse economic development has an immediate impact upon the political scene and generates unrest and tension on a large scale. It is here that the political institutions that we have developed since independence are now facing their gravest challenge. Does our present system of parliamentary democracy have the resilience and capacity to meet the tremendous pressures to which it is being subjected? Some recent events would lead one to the view that in a real crisis the whole parliamentary system is in danger of being bypassed and becoming irrelevant. However, no one has yet come up with a viable alternative, although it seems clear to most that the present system will have to undergo considerable modifications if it has to remain valid and meaningful in the years that lie ahead. Here again, the widespread prevalence of questionable political morality has considerably sapped the inner vitality of the system, rendering it more vulnerable to pressures than it would otherwise have been.

The third dimension involves the whole question of our unfinished social transformation. During the freedom movement, social reform was always a major plank in the programme for national regeneration. Not only the Indian National Congress but numerous non-political organizations attacked vigorously the evils of casteism and social discrimination. Unfortunately,



this zeal for social reform seems largely to have evaporated after independence, and with the adoption of the Constitution in which discrimination in any form is forbidden, and the passing of various legislative measures, a feeling of complacency has entered our attitudes in this regard. Casteism seems to have secured political legitimacy in our electoral processes, thus gaining a sort of spurious respectability. This is most unfortunate, because as long as society continues to be fractured by inherent discrimination it will never be able to generate the inner dynamism so necessary for national progress. The recent Harijan revolt in Maharashtra is a pointer to the way things can develop on a national scale if this matter is not once again given the top priority that it deserves, not only by the government but by the nation as a whole.

Even apart from the problems of caste the whole dynamics of urban society has come to revolve increasingly around material possessions. The practice of dowry, which was so bitterly attacked by great social reformers as far back as Raja Rammohun Roy, is not only rampant but seems to have been raised to a system of mathematical precision. Thus, an engineer apparently commands the highest dowry, followed, one learns, by junior doctors, civil servants, and so on. Ostentatious and vulgar displays of wealth at weddings have become commonplace, and that too in a country which is still among the poorest in the world. This generates deepseated psychological resentments that can assume fearful proportions in the light of the glaring contrast between what a tiny majority has and what a vast majority wants. One wonders whether the affluent are even aware of this growing dichotomy and its

possible implications.

The fourth and final dimension of the crisis that we face today is moral and spiritual. In the same way as the fourth dimension of time transcends the three spatial dimensions, this moral and spiritual aspect is at the very heart of our present predicament. The widespread growth of corruption in almost all spheres of life and the collapse of any sort of moral foundations are symptoms of a spiritual bankruptcy that, like a slow but deadly poison, is steadily eating into the vitals of our nation. I am not using the term "moral" in any puritanical or theological sense but rather in its broader connotation of integrity and commitment to any sort of deeper values. Some of my friends, who for years have been poking good-humoured fun at my references to "spiritual values," have now begun to agree that unless there is a revolution in this sphere none of the other aspects can really be coped with. With every passing year the abiding significance of some of Gandhi's concepts is becoming increasingly clear to persons like me belonging to the post-Gandhian generation. Thus, even with favourable monsoons for years on end, it will obviously not be possible for us in the foreseeable future to match the material standards of living enjoyed by the affluent nations today, nor is the multiplication of our gross national product the end all and be all of our national endeavours. The inner quality of life is, in the final analysis, far more significant than its material trappings. And yet our society is so organized that the glittering promise of material affluence continues to be held out as the highest goal. Is it surprising, therefore, that each succeeding year brings about increasing frustration



and resentment among the younger generations when they realize that the goal placed before them is virtually impossible to achieve?

The irony of the situation is that, at a time when the younger generations in the nations of the West are themselves turning away in disgust from the ultra-materialism of their societies and making attempts, howsoever awkward these may often appear, to move towards some of the values for which India has stood through the centuries, we in India should be turning away from our own spiritual inheritance in a pathetic attempt to storm the gilded citadels of money and materialism. The point here is not by any means that we should slacken our efforts to increase the living standards of our people. A decent living standard is the birthright of every human being and is essential for the development of the higher reaches of the human personality. In our tradition voluntary renunciation has been extolled, but there is no spiritual merit in enforced poverty. Also, a life-negating asceticism is not really in the mainstream of our cultural tradition and is certainly not the answer to our present problems. But the real danger is that we have drifted into a value system totally out of tune not only with our spiritual heritage but also with the harsh compulsions of our economic situation.

It is becoming increasingly clear that without a fundamental "cultural revolution" (Indian, not Chinese, style) we will be trapped in a perpetual double-bind of unlimited wants chasing strictly limited means. We must continue to have faith in the destiny of this nation and in its inherent capacity to overcome all difficulties. Through the millennia of her long and

complicated history India had repeatedly displayed a capacity, in moments of deepest crisis, to throw up a spiritual movement which once again kindles the dying spark of hope and faith. It is perhaps not over-optimistic to believe that once again, in this hour of crisis, a movement for spiritual regeneration will arise sweeping from the eternal snows of the Himalayas down to where the three great oceans meet at the feet of India.

I have taken this opportunity to express some of the thoughts that have been uppermost in my mind of late, and which are in varying degrees reflected in the pieces contained in the book. Any collection of speeches and writings on various subjects over several years is bound to be disjointed and rather unsatisfactory, but I suppose this is an occupational hazard for a writer who is heavily involved in public life. Indeed, I must admit that I often long to be able to take a year off and write at some length on various things that interest me, concentrating essentially on the fascinating mystery of the human personality and the evolving texture of consciousness in this evolving universe to which Man has the exciting privilege of belonging. I have a half-finished novel in my drawer, and a book on the *Upanishads* in my head. Also, at some point of time, I plan to write my autobiography; but perhaps all this will have to wait until I retire from public life. In any case, for the present I offer the reader only an *hors d'oeuvre*, in the hope that some of it may be found reasonably appetising.

New Delhi  
27 May 1974

KARAN SINGH



# Contents

## SECTION I THE MESSAGE OF INDIA

1. <i>I Believe</i>	3
2. <i>Hinduism—Challenge and Response</i>	9
3. <i>The Message of Aurobindo</i>	17
4. <i>The Essence of Hinduism</i>	37
5. <i>Art and Civilization</i>	40
6. <i>On Happiness</i>	44
7. <i>Human Unity</i>	48
8. <i>Knowledge and Wisdom</i>	53

## SECTION II INDIA IN TRANSITION

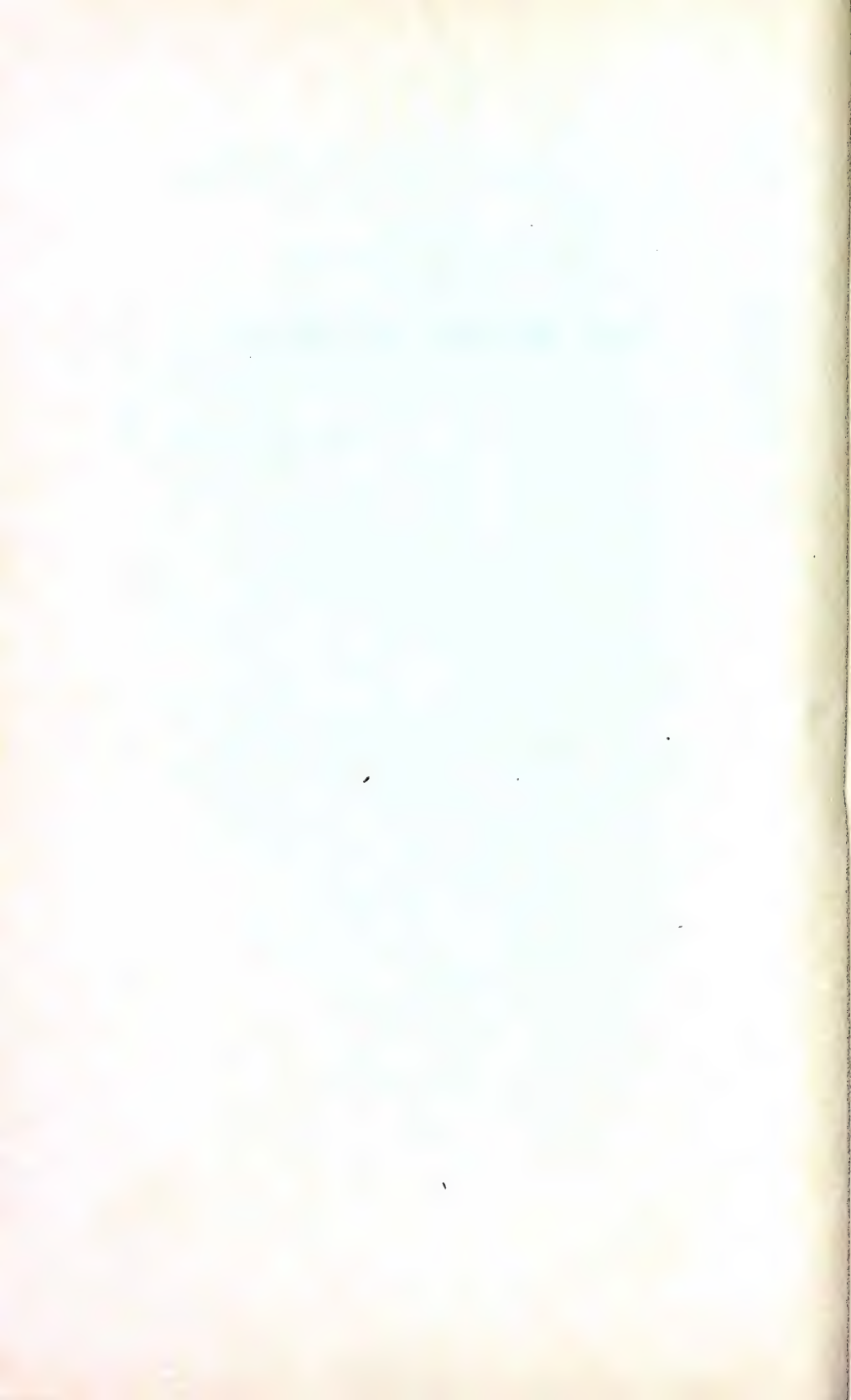
9. <i>Socialism in Ancient India</i>	61
10. <i>The Indian Revolution</i>	66
11. <i>A Programme for Our Youth</i>	75
12. <i>Past, Present, and Future</i>	80
13. <i>Youth and the Modern Age</i>	87
14. <i>Enlightened Patriotism</i>	95
15. <i>Service above Self</i>	103
16. <i>Privy Purses and Privileges</i>	109
17. <i>The Victory—A Many-splendoured Achievement</i>	112
18. <i>The War—Ideological Perspectives</i>	117
19. <i>Challenges before Women</i>	123

20.	<i>Changing India and Women</i>	129
21.	<i>Family Planning, Poverty, and Labour</i>	134

SECTION III  
TOURISM AND WILD LIFE

22.	<i>Tourism—The World's Largest Industry</i>	141
23.	<i>Prospects for Indian Tourism</i>	150
24.	<i>Declaration on Human Environment</i>	157
25.	<i>Project Tiger</i>	161
26.	<i>Wild Life in Kenya</i>	169

**SECTION I**  
**THE MESSAGE OF INDIA**





# 1

## I Believe

It has been said that we spend the first half of our lives trying to understand the older generation and the second half trying to understand the younger. But one is never sure exactly where the half mark is. Be that as it may, it seems to me that forty is as good a time as any to take stock of one's life and reexamine the fundamental bases upon which one's world-view is founded. I suppose at forty one formally enters middle age, and I can remember as a boy thinking of forty as being almost preternaturally old. And yet, by current political standards, perhaps I can derive some satisfaction from the fact that I am still considered rather young!

More than half my life, almost twenty-two years, has been spent in what is known as a "public career." I was just over eighteen when, in 1949, I became constitutional head of Jammu and Kashmir, remaining in that position under different names (Regent, Sadar-i-Riyasat, Governor) for eighteen years. The last seven

years, from March 1967, have been spent in a more active political field, and this entire period has been for me an extremely valuable and exciting experience in education, using the term in its broadest sense. A detailed account will have to await my autobiography, which I look forward to writing after I have done with active politics. Meanwhile, this is an attempt to identify some of the more important beliefs that I have come to hold in the course of the last forty years, howsoever imperfectly I may have succeeded in making them the actual basis of my life.

Our beliefs flow from the totality of experience to which we have been exposed. I have been fortunate that my exposure has in some respects been more varied and intense than falls to the lot of most people. There are four main sets of factors that have moulded my thinking—books, music, travel, and people. In all four I have had the good fortune of an extremely wide and stimulating contact, and if I have not imbibed more from them the fault is entirely my own. In any case, I shall try briefly to identify the major beliefs I have come to hold, even though I am acutely aware of the difficulty in expressing complex ideas in simple words.

I believe that man, still in an intermediate stage between the animal and the divine, can raise himself into a higher plane of being if he makes a conscious and dedicated effort to do so; there can be no nobler endeavour than this aspiration towards divinity. I believe that each human being born on this planet, or for that matter anywhere else in the limitless cosmos, carries within himself an unquenchable spark of divinity. Our true destiny as human beings revolves around



the fanning of this spark into the smokeless flame of spiritual realization.

I believe that all political, economic, and social activity should have as its ultimate goal the fostering of this divinity within each individual. Scientific and technological developments are ultimately counter-productive if they do not lead us towards this end. I believe that at their highest all religions are so many different paths leading to the same goal, the ineffable and indescribable union between the human and the divine; that mystics of all religious persuasions have realized and preached essentially the same doctrine of human love and divine communion; and that strife and hatred in the name of religion is therefore the very antithesis of spirituality and a gross slur on the name of humanity.

I believe that India, with its unique heritage stretching back to the very dawn of civilization, has a special role to play in fostering a society which would support this process of divinization. In a world torn by violence and hatred I believe that India can play a crucial role in leading humanity towards a new equilibrium between wealth and wisdom, having and being. I believe that we must work for political integration, economic growth, social transformation, and secular democracy not merely as ends in themselves but because this combination can best provide the framework within which the people of our ancient land can fulfil their destiny.

I believe that as long as millions go without the basic necessities of civilized existence it is utterly unreal to talk to them about things of the spirit, and that the basic material needs of man must be satisfied

as a foundation for further spiritual growth. I believe that this can be achieved only when we succeed in motivating the people of India to put in several decades of hard, disciplined effort for the production of wealth and simultaneously adopt policies to ensure that the wealth so produced is distributed fairly to all sections of society. I believe that this can be achieved not by propagating the bitter doctrine of implacable class warfare but, rather, by trying to involve the nation as a whole in the mighty effort required to break the poverty barrier that still persists around us.

I believe that politics will always be turbulent because that is the nature of politics, as it is the nature of the sun to be hot and water to be wet, and that it is futile to lament over the state of politics as did Arjuna on the field of battle. I believe that even if the historical Krishna is not standing next to us holding the reins of our chariot, we must attune ourselves to his voice that echoes and re-echoes in the inner stillness of our being, and face boldly the battle of life into which we find ourselves precipitated. I believe that, approached in the right spirit, political activity can be a powerful instrument for human transformation and can thus contribute substantially to the broader goals that lie before the human race.

I believe that love and friendship constitute the surest bonds in a world where everything is constantly changing, and that these should be cherished whenever and wherever they are found. I believe that the creation of beauty through music and poetry, the fine arts and architecture, is a central function of civilization and must be encouraged so that increasingly large sections of society can derive the immaterial



but extremely valuable benefits that flow therefrom, so that man can be led from the outer beauty of form to the inner beauty of spirit. I believe, further, that our system of education should be designed to inculcate in the young an awareness of the primacy of the spirit, without in any way belittling the importance of the material foundations upon which any dynamic civilization must rest.

I believe that our generation holds the present in trust for posterity, and that we have to fulfil this responsibility so that we can repay the debt we ourselves owe to the past. I believe that we must, therefore, protect this planet from wanton despoliation and blatant exploitation in the name of progress, that we must conserve its atmosphere and water, its forests and wild life, from the destruction they are facing as the result of increasing urbanization and industrialization.

I believe that despite continuing animosity and hostility between nations, and growing violent divisions within nations themselves, the human race will be forced by the end of this century to move towards some form of world order transcending national barriers. And although each one of us owes a deep debt to the country of our origin, as members of the human race we also owe a wider loyalty to the planet that has nurtured our kind for millions of years.

I believe that life is necessarily a mosaic of joy and sorrow, of pleasure and pain, of failure and success, of shadow and sunlight; that we must accept these dualities as a necessary stage in our spiritual progress until we are able to transcend them; and that each experience can be a valuable means for inner growth,

unpleasant situations often affording greater opportunities for development than superficially pleasant ones.

I believe that death is a natural and necessary corollary to life, and must be accepted in a positive manner rather than with fear and dread. I believe that the death of the body merely marks another step in the long journey of the pilgrim soul towards its final destination, and that man must shake off the superstitious dread that he has with regard to this essential and inescapable phenomenon.

I believe, finally, that a divine destiny pervades the cosmos, a destiny not distant and remote but one in which in some mysterious way, each one of us is actively involved. I believe that the most effective means of fulfilling that destiny is a combination of active outer involvement in furthering human welfare and intense inner striving to reach the goal of spiritual realization. I believe, thus, that the most eloquent prayer man has evolved is one that has resounded in India down through the corridors of time since the very dawn of our civilization:

*From the unreal lead me to the real;  
From darkness lead me to the light;  
From death lead me to immortality.*



## 2

# Hinduism—Challenge and Response

Hinduism today is again in one of its periods of renaissance. Representing a synthesis of virtually all types of religious experience, ranging from animism to the highest reaches of *Vedanta* and mysticism, it provides a total view of life which has stood for thousands of years surviving incredible challenges and assaults. Though one of the oldest religions in the world, it is at least as vigorous today as any other and, indeed, seems to be proving more easily adaptable to the demands of this nuclear age. Over the last hundred years such outstanding saints as Ramakrishna and Vivekananda, Dayananda and Ramana Maharshi, Aurobindo and Sri Krishnaprem have imbued Hinduism with fresh light and power through their dynamic reinterpretations. The message of Hinduism has spread far beyond the boundaries of India, not so much to the East as in the past but more so in recent years to the affluent West in its renewed quest for peace and happiness.

Under the traumatic impact of modern science and technology the old is collapsing and the new is struggling to be born, and man finds himself poised precariously between the past and the future. Spiritual values in the contemporary world have crucial importance if mankind is to survive its own ingenuity. The question is often asked as to how far Hinduism will be able in the present context to preserve its integrity and at the same time satisfy the deepest aspirations of the modern spirit, for it is only when a religion does both that it can really justify its existence and claim a viable sanction. The world today is in travail, as if in the throes of a new birth, a major transformation of human history and consciousness. Hinduism, with its glowing faith in the inherent divinity of every human being and the ultimate unity of all life, can be of tremendous value to mankind in its quest for truth and the full flowering of the human personality.

Ever since Vedic times the religion now popularly known as Hinduism has played a decisive role in the destiny of this nation. By providing cultural unity and continuity on a continental scale it was in fact largely responsible for the very subsistence of India as an entity despite centuries of alien rule and incredible political fragmentation. Today, after numerous alternations of shadow and sunlight, triumph and tragedy, Hinduism is again renascent. Mankind's technological competence has so far outstripped its collective wisdom so much so that its very existence can be jeopardized by a single push of the nuclear button. With this gulf between knowledge and wisdom growing steadily wider, the renaissance of Hinduism assumes special importance. Since it is based on direct spiritual realiza-



tion rather than scripture and dogma and lacks any rigid ecclesiastical structure, it has always been open to creative reinterpretation. From the time of the *Vedas*, thousands of years before the birth of Christ, right down to the present century, there have been a series of restatements of Hinduism designed to meet the changing demands and compulsions of the times. It was a fascinating process whereby remarkable men and women, by the sheer force of their personality and spiritual stature, were able to influence the lives and actions of millions without any support of state patronage or power. These personages, drawn from every walk of life and social strata, have through the ages not only kept alive the basic tenets of Hinduism but by reinterpreting them to succeeding generations kept it in a state of constant relevance and significance.

It is true, and perhaps inevitable, that in over five thousand years of its history a number of undesirable and objectionable practices should have sought shelter under the umbrella of Hinduism. After all, when literally billions of people have professed a certain religion the weaknesses of their social and economic structure will necessarily be reflected in various quasi-religious customs and rituals. However, it will be unfair to ascribe all these ills to Hinduism. In fact, looked at from the reverse angle, it can be claimed that the credit for maintaining the cohesion of such a vast mass of humanity for so long a period, and for producing a major civilization with some of the greatest achievements of art, culture, and philosophy known to man, can largely be traced to the deep influence of Hinduism upon the Indian people. In any case, there are five fundamental concepts which, rather than the vast mass

of ritual and often crass superstition that has grown around it over the millenia, constitute as I see it the core of this great religion. These are:

(1) *Oneness of the human race.* The *Rig Vedic* concept of *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam* (the world as a family) is now becoming a reality. With supersonic travel around the corner and the extraordinary advance in global telecommunications and space technology, the world is shrinking before our very eyes and a concept which came to our *Rishis* in a flash of inspiration has now assumed global relevance. The growing gap between man's destructive ability and his capacity for constructive cooperation poses a serious threat to our continued existence, and unless we start looking upon mankind as a single family, cutting across all divisions of race and nationality, political ideology and religious denomination, it will not be possible for our race to survive for long.

(2) *Divinity of man.* The *Upanishads* have a marvellous phrase for the human race, *amritasya putrah* (children of immortality). This implies that every human being born into this world, regardless of where he lives or what beliefs he professes, enshrines a spark of the divinity that pervades and permeates the cosmos. In this view, man is not merely a fortuitous conglomeration of atoms, but embodies a divine principle which makes the enjoyment of human dignity and the possibility of spiritual evolution his birth right. The divinity of God is now no longer a sufficient slogan; if God exists He is by definition divine and His divinity hardly needs reiteration. Today we must move on towards the concept of the divinity of man and, flowing therefrom, the inalienable dignity and irreducible value of



the human individual.

(3) *Essential unity of all religions.* The need is for “unity” rather than “tolerance,” because tolerance is essentially a negative concept implying a somewhat grudging agreement to the existence of religions other than one’s own. This is not enough; what is required today is an active acceptance of the doctrine put forward in the *Rig Vedic* dictum *Ekam Sad vipraah: bahudha vadanti* (truth is one, the wise call it by many names). Indeed, it is the concept that all religions are so many different paths leading to the same goal, rather than a rejection of religion itself, that forms the true foundations for secularism. Religions provide the broad conceptual framework and the psycho-spiritual motivation within which can develop the eternal mystery of communion between man and the divine, and the Hindu view of religion has always accepted and welcomed all movements growing towards God. Viewed thus, religion can become a great unifying force in a world still riven by suspicion and hatred, rather than the source of conflict that it has so often been in the past.

(4) *Reconstruction of society.* Hinduism makes it clear that it is the duty of each individual to work for the betterment of society; *bahujana sukhaya bahujana hitayacha* (for the happiness of the many, for the welfare of the many), and to combine this with self-realization: *atmano mokshartham jagathitaya cha*. As long as millions go without adequate food and clothing, shelter and education, postulations regarding the divinity of man have little relevance. Vivekananda used to say that it was a sin to preach religion to one who is hungry or naked. Today in free India it must be our active



endeavour to alleviate the suffering of our countrymen and to build for them a new socio-economic order which would ensure that every Indian receives at least the basic requirements for a decent human existence without which any growth towards deeper values is virtually impossible. In this context such absurd irrelevancies as untouchability must be swept aside once and for all. No longer can we afford to indulge in spurious intellectual gymnastics to justify a practice that for centuries has been a blot upon the face of our nation and constitutes the very antithesis of the principles that form the true bedrock of Hinduism.

(5) *Primacy of spiritual experience.* A key factor in Hinduism is the primacy that it has always accorded to spiritual experience rather than intellectual disputation and theorizing. This is of the utmost importance today when men and women, particularly the younger generations, are searching not for theories but for an actual method of coping with the challenges of modern living. Hinduism has always stressed that religion is a truth that has to be lived in the growing light of the soul, not argued in the endless darkness of mental disputation. The *Gita*, for example, says quite clearly that for a man of enlightened wisdom the scriptures are as superfluous as a well in the midst of a flood. Ramakrishna puts it more bluntly when he says that loading scriptures on an ass does not make him enlightened. Hinduism postulates a clearcut goal of spiritual realization, and emphasizes that every life-situation provides an opportunity to move towards that goal. All the circumstances of our lives, happy or unhappy, pleasant or unpleasant, are to be welcomed as so many opportunities to develop inwardly. It is also

significant that where spiritual achievement is concerned Hindu society, despite its rigid fragmentation, has always offered the highest reverence to the seer regardless of his caste or economic status.

These principles are central to Hinduism, though by no means its exclusive property. They are based upon the spiritual attainments of seers and mystics, and are crucially relevant to the present predicament of man as they provide that firm bedrock of inner values upon which alone an integrated superstructure of material welfare, social cohesion, and intellectual emancipation can be raised. If religions today remain bound within the shackles of narrow orthodoxy they will become increasingly irrelevant to the rising generations, leaving man with an inner void which no amount of material progress will be able to fill.

It is true that economic problems are tremendously important, overridingly so for those sections of mankind which still live below subsistence level, and obviously economic growth cannot await spiritual enlightenment. However, it is also true that those countries and those sections of society which have in fact attained economic affluence have not thereby necessarily achieved happiness or fulfilment. Centuries ago the *Upanishads* said *na vittena tarpaniyo manushyah* (man is never satisfied by wealth). If today we keep before us only economic goals neglecting the deeper spiritual values, we will end up by so exploiting the resources of spaceship earth as to deplete our planet and yet not succeed in creating happy and integrated human beings.

Hinduism is indeed at the crossroads today, for the simple reason that this is exactly where the entire



human race stands. The point is not whether one particular religion is right or wrong, but whether religion as such can still play a vital and creative role in human affairs. Some look upon religion as simply a hangover from an earlier age, excess baggage that should be shed as quickly and completely as possible. My own view is that in the heart of every great religion there is a core of spiritual truth and inspiration which, far from being superfluous or irrelevant, can perhaps provide the only true light that mankind needs today when it is poised at the threshold of a new era.

It is also my belief that Hinduism is particularly well-suited to provide a valid and viable world-view at a time when man is breaking the bonds that have held him rooted to this planet for millions of years, and is literally reaching for the stars. Mankind is poised at the threshold of a fresh evolutionary thrust towards a new concept of living. Ultimately, it is to the extent they are able to creatively nurture this breakthrough that the great religions—including Hinduism—will be judged by generations yet unborn.



### 3

## The Message of Aurobindo

India has gone through tremendous upheavals in its long and tortuous history over the last five thousand years, but there is one thing unique about India that sets it apart from other great civilizations that flourished in the past, the Babylonians and the Egyptians; the Greeks and the Romans; the Mayas and the Aztecs. Some of them were contemporaneous with the dawn of Indian civilization, and yet all of them have vanished and live today only in the minds of museumologists and research scholars, whereas India continues to be dynamic and vital, in touch with the sources of its tradition and firmly based on its past heritage.

One of the main reasons is that in India, whenever it seemed that the past was going to be extinguished or the essence of India was going to succumb to the forces of tyranny and annihilation unleashed upon it countless times in its history, great men and women have always been born who have once again relighted the lamp that

is India, who have once again given fresh hope, courage and inspiration to the masses of this country. Some of these great men and women are known and are worshipped as *Avataras* and as saints. Others are unknown and have worked in manners mysterious and beyond normal comprehension. But all of them have contributed towards the continuance of India from the very earliest times, from the *Vedas* and the *Upanishads*, the Buddha and the *Puranas*, the great Acharyas of South India and the medieval saint singers.

And then, of course, the tremendous renaissance that took place here in the nineteenth century. It is a fascinating history of how our philosophy and our religion have been constantly reinterpreted down through the centuries. In order to understand Sri Aurobindo, it is essential to know and understand the setting in which he worked and lived and rose to fame.

The great Indian renaissance, an extraordinary efflorescence, began with Raja Rammohun Roy in the nineteenth century. In the entire history of the world, with the possible exception of the ancient Greeks of the time of Pericles and Plato, I do not think one will find compressed within half a century such a remarkable wealth of genius and talent in every sphere of human activity as there was in Bengal during this period.

In 1857, the year of what we now call the first Indian war of independence, also known as the Indian Mutiny, India lay broken and prostrate at the feet of her foreign conquerors. At a time like this, it was within the Hindu social reform movement that the awakening first began. This was inevitable because before the advent of the British, the Muslims were rulers of a large part of India, particularly Bengal. The British impact made the



Muslims sullen and they went into the background. The Hindus, who were intellectually more resilient, began looking into their society and soon realized that the real weakness in India lay in Hindu society itself. While all sorts of ridiculous superstitions flourished in the name of religion, the supreme vision of the *Vedanta* and the *Upanishads* had been narrowed down through ignorance and bigotry into a mere desert trickle of dead habit. That is why the best minds of the time decided first of all to concentrate upon Hindu social reform.

Raja Rammohun Roy founded the Brahmo Samaj in Bengal. His two main followers, Devendranath Tagore and Keshub Chandra Sen, in due course founded the Adi Brahmo Samaj and the Brahmo Samaj of India. In 1867, the Prarthana Samaj was founded in Maharashtra by Sri Ranade and Sri Bhandarkar. In 1875, that spiritual dynamo, Swami Dayananda Saraswati, founded the Arya Samaj in the Punjab. All these movements in their own ways began to attempt to remove the accretions that had developed upon Hinduism through centuries of servitude to foreign rule.

There were other causes too for the Indian revival: the founding of the Theosophical Society in 1875 by Madame Blavatsky and Colonel Olcott, the work of the great Orientalists like Max Mueller, Fergusson, Cunningham, and others. India owes a deep debt of gratitude to these westerners who helped to rediscover for us our language, archaeology, and the total wealth of our heritage.

All this was outside the heart of traditional Hinduism. But presently there was a revolution within the heart of Hinduism when Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Viveka-



nanda, two of the most remarkable people to have been produced by any country in any age, appeared on the scene. The magnificent relationship between them, the glowing spiritual realization of Ramakrishna, and the marvellous power and dynamism of Vivekananda produced what was virtually a revolution not only in Hinduism but in our whole concept of religion as well.

Its political implications were obvious. The British domination of India was based, not upon its military might alone, but perhaps even more upon the myth of western superiority; and once this myth was broken and we began to realize the causes of our own weakness it was only a matter of time before the British rule would come to an end. In 1885 an Englishman, Allan Octavian Hume, founded the Indian National Congress, the party that was destined to lead India to independence and beyond and in 1893, after spending fourteen years in England, Sri Aurobindo returned to India.

Although brought up entirely in the Western tradition, in Greek and Latin, English and French, yet so powerful were his *samskaras* that he plunged into political activity soon after his return to India. He first contributed a series of seven articles to the *Indu Prakash*, a journal of considerable importance at the time, under the title of "New Lamps for Old." This was where Sri Aurobindo raised his voice against British rule, against the servitude and slavery to which India had been reduced by its Western masters. Actually his political activity was very brief. In 1905 he left his job of vice principal of Baroda College and went to Bengal at the time of the partition. He came to be involved in what has come to be known as the Alipore bomb con-

spiracy case, and was arrested and tried for attempting forcibly to overthrow the British government. He had already begun the practice of *yoga*, but it was during his year of confinement in prison—his *ashramvas*—that he had an overwhelming spiritual experience:

I looked at the jail that secluded me from men and it was no longer by its high walls that I was imprisoned; no, it was Vasudeva who surrounded me. I walked under the branches of the tree in front of my cell, but it was not the tree, I knew it was Vasudeva, it was Sri Krishna whom I saw standing there and holding over me His shade. I looked at the bars of my cell, the very grating that did duty for a door, and again I saw Vasudeva. It was Narayana who was guarding and standing sentry over me. I lay on the coarse blankets that were given to me for a couch and felt the arms of Sri Krishna around me, the arms of My Friend and Lover.

It was during this period that Sri Aurobindo's spiritual nature began to assert itself more and more clearly. The trial itself must rank as among the most dramatic and exciting in the annals of modern jurisprudence. It is a fascinating story as to how Sri Aurobindo was arrested, how Deshabandhu Chittaranjan Das, then an unknown lawyer, went out to defend Sri Aurobindo and used words in his peroration which perhaps had never before been used in a criminal case:

My appeal to you is this, that long after the controversy will be hushed in silence, long after this turmoil and agitation will have ceased, long after he



is dead and gone, he will be looked upon as the poet of patriotism, as the prophet of nationalism and the lover of humanity. Long after he is dead and gone, his words will have echoed and re-echoed, not only in India but across distant seas and lands. Therefore I say that the man in his position is not only standing before the bar of this court, but before the bar of the High Court of History.

The judge was Beachcroft who, by an amazing coincidence, had been a class-fellow of Aurobindo at Cambridge. It is obvious from the records that Aurobindo was in fact deeply involved in the conspiracy. It is clear from his writings that he did accept the necessity of violence when a violent power was trying to dominate us. Nevertheless, such was the system of justice that he was acquitted because the specific charge against him could not be proved. After acquittal, Aurobindo started the *Karmayogin*, but his writings now had a more overtly spiritual tone. When finally, in 1910, he got what he termed an *adesa* to leave Bengal, he went first to Chandranagar, and from there to Pondicherry, and was henceforth completely out of politics. Aurobindo flashed across the Indian sky like a meteor which was so powerful and charged with dynamism and light that it left an indelible impression not only upon his time but on all times.

With regard to the political message of Aurobindo, I would like to draw your attention only to a few salient points. The first was his clear recognition of the role of the masses in the Indian national movement. Until that time, the Indian National Congress had been dominated by the so-called moderates, very able and



good men like Sir Phirozeshah Mehta, Dadabhai Naoroji, M. G. Ranade, and Gopal Krishna Gokhale—men of the highest integrity and learning—nevertheless people who did not really have a mass base. The Congress in its early years was very much of an arm-chair sort of undertaking where people met to pass resolutions urging the British government to part, crumb by crumb, with the loaf of independence. But Aurobindo realized that this simply would not do. This policy of “petition, prayer, and protest,” as he put it, was not going to lead India anywhere, and he was one of the first leaders in India to stress the importance of the masses, the proletariat. Without involving the masses in the freedom movement it would never really get off the ground like a plane lumbering along the runway without the necessary power and the lift to take off.

Aurobindo was an incisive and fearless critic of the British. Before him, there was an almost superstitious awe of the British among the Indian intelligentsia. But Aurobindo’s mind had been sharpened by the Western tradition. He realized that the rulers had to be attacked frontally if the bond of intellectual enslavement was to be broken. As he wrote about them in 1893 when the British were at the zenith of their power in India:

...they are very commonplace men put into a quite unique position. They are really ordinary men—and not only ordinary men, but ordinary Englishmen—types of the middle class of Philistines, in the graphic English phrase, with the narrow hearts and commercial habit of mind peculiar to that sort of people.

And Aurobindo was not only fearless in attacking the British, but equally in attacking the system of British administration. For example, he said about the educational system:

Our system of public instruction, the most ingeniously complete machine for murder that human stupidity ever invented, and murder not only of a man's body but of a man's soul, of that sacred fire of individuality in him which is far holier and more precious than this mere mortal breath.

Nor was Aurobindo entirely negative. With every criticism he made he put forward a positive programme of action. While he advocated economic boycott, he also put forward the logical corollary of *swadeshi*. He advocated educational boycott, but with it a system of national education. In fact he went to Calcutta as principal of the first national college. While advocating judicial boycott, again, he suggested in their place national arbitration courts. Aurobindo realized clearly that, if the British and the institutions built by them had to go, they must be replaced by national institutions. Thus his whole approach—as may be inferred from his writings in the *Vandemataram* and the *Karmayogin*—was one of constructive suggestions and programmes alongwith an implacable attack on British rule.

While this was his main political approach at the time, the spiritual strand in his life was always very important. He had a remarkable experience at the very moment he set foot on India after his return from England. Then he had another major experience of the



“infinite vacant” when he went to the Shankaracharya hill in Kashmir and looked across the valley and the lake from the magnificent temple of Shiva. Presently, he became interested in the practice of *yoga*, and when the Maharashtrian yogi, Lele, initiated him into *yoga*, Aurobindo had very powerful experiences. So, while he was politically active, his *sadhana* and his yogic practices were also continuing. Therefore, his three key political concepts I will put before you now are very considerably influenced by this spiritual background.

The first is his concept of the nation. He looked upon India not merely as a geographical or political entity but as a dynamic spiritual entity and a living being, a *devatama*. Kalidasa in his magnificent opening of *Kumarasambhava* used the term *devatama* for the Himalayas:

*Astyuttarosyām dishi devatāma,  
Himalayo nama nagadhirajah.*

Aurobindo looked upon India as a *devatama*, and he found the key to this concept in Bankim Chandra Chatterjee’s *Ananda Math* and *Vandemataram*. The following passages show how major a factor this spiritual nationalism is in Aurobindo’s whole political thought:

What is a nation? What is your mother country? It is not a piece of earth, nor a figure of speech, nor a fiction of the mind. It is a mighty *shakti*, composed of all the *shaktis* of all the millions of units that make up the nation, just as *Bhavani Mahisha Mardini* sprang into being from the *shakti* of all the millions



of gods assembled in one mass of force and welded into unity.

You will remember how in the story in the *Durga-saptasati* it was necessary for all the shining *devatas* to pool their power in the form of a goddess who alone could defeat the demon Mahishasura. Similarly, Aurobindo implied that unless all Indians pooled their power in a mighty spiritual endeavour, the demon of foreign rule could not be defeated. And if the nation is a spirit, a great divine and maternal power, then nationalism is also not just a convenient method of politics, it is a *sadhana*, the highest duty of which we are capable, a mighty *yajna* into which we must be prepared to sacrifice everything:

Love has a place in politics, but it is the love of one's country, for one's countrymen, for the glory, greatness and happiness of the race, the divine *ananda* of self-immolation for one's fellows, the ecstasy of relieving their sufferings, the joy of seeing one's blood flow for country and freedom, the bliss of union in death with the fathers of the race. The feeling of almost physical delight in the touch of the mother-soil, of the winds that blow from Indian seas, of the rivers that stream from Indian hills, in the hearing of Indian speech, music, poetry, in the familiar sights, sounds, habits, dress, manners of our Indian life, this is the physical root of that love. The pride in the past, the pain in our present, the passion for the future are its trunk and branches. Self-sacrifice and self-forgetfulness, great service, high endurance for the country are its fruit. And the

sap which keeps it alive is the realization of the motherland of God in the country, the vision of the Mother, the perpetual contemplation, and adoration of the Mother.

The two important concepts of Aurobindo, then, were of the nation as a spiritual entity and of nationalism as the highest *sadhana*. Besides Aurobindo felt that because India had been violently subjugated, she was fully justified, in using violence, if necessary, to achieve her freedom:

It is the common habit of established governments, and especially those which are themselves oppressors, to brand all violent methods in subject peoples and communities as criminal and wicked. But no nation yet has listened to the cant of the oppressor when itself put to the test, and the general conscience of humanity approves the refusal. Under certain circumstances a civil struggle becomes in reality a battle, and the morality of war is different from the morality of peace. To shrink from bloodshed and violence under such circumstances is a weakness deserving as severe a rebuke as Sri Krishna addressed to Arjuna when he shrank from the colossal civil slaughter on the field of Kurukshetra. Liberty is the life-breath of a nation; and when the life is attacked, when it is sought to suppress all chance of breathing by violent pressure, any and every means of self-preservation becomes right and justifiable, just as it is lawful for a man who is being strangled to rid himself of the pressure on his throat by any means in his power.



Besides his exalted concept of nation and of nationalism, there was also a third aspect of Aurobindo's politics: his view that India has a special role to play in the welfare and progress of humanity. He constantly reiterated that the freedom of India was not only important for India but for the world too, for without freedom India could not make the contribution that it was her destiny to make for the future development of the human race. This is extremely crucial when we study Aurobindo, because without this aspect we might fall into the error of dismissing him as an ardent and eloquent nationalist and no more. One key passage may be quoted here:

India must be reborn, because her rebirth is demanded by the future of the world. India cannot perish, our race cannot become extinct, because among all the divisions of mankind it is to India that is deserved the highest and the most splendid destiny, most essential to the future of the human race. It is she who must send forth from herself the future religion of the entire world, the eternal religion which is to harmonize all religions, science, philosophies and make mankind one soul.

And again:

This is the *dharma* that the salvation of humanity was cherished in the seclusion of this peninsula from of old. It is to give this religion that India is rising. She does not rise as other countries do, for self or when she is strong, to trample on the weak. She is rising to shed the eternal light entrusted to her over the whole world.



This, then, is the link as it were between Aurobindo's politics and his *yoga*, between Aurobindo before 1910 and Aurobindo after 1910.

For 40 years, from 1910 to 1950, Aurobindo never once moved out of Pondicherry. He perfected there a most remarkable and startling system of *yoga* with which he sought to usher in a new dimension of consciousness. I must say that I am not an Ashramite, and it is therefore possible that some persons may not fully agree with what I say. Another difficulty, of course, is that it is simpler to write or speak about politics, but not about things of the spirit which are very difficult to put into words. *Yato Vacho Nirvartante Aprapya Manasa Saha*, as the *Vedas* say: Where words fall back alongwith the mind, unable to comprehend! With these limitations, therefore, I will try to place before you what I consider to be the salient features of Aurobindo's approach.

Aurobindo subscribed to the basic theory of the *Vedanta*, the theory of the immanence and transcendence of the divine, *Ishavasyamidamsarvam Yatkinch jagatyamjagat*. He accepted it with certain special features to which I will refer shortly. His *Vedanta* is beautifully expressed in one of his poems and I think it conveys, better perhaps than a large number of his books, the spirit in which he approached the divine. The poem called *Who* begins and concludes as follows:

*In the blue of the sky, in the green of the forest  
Whose is the hand that has painted the glow,  
When the winds were asleep in the womb of the ether  
Who was it roused them and bade them to blow?  
He is lost in the heart, in the cavern of nature,*

*He is found in the brain where he builds up the  
thought,  
In the pattern and bloom of the flowers he is woven  
In the luminous net of the stars he is caught  
It is he in the sun who is ageless and deathless,  
And into the midnight his shadow is thrown,  
When darkness was blind and engulfed within dark-  
ness,  
He was seated within it, immense and alone.*

So the first point is that Aurobindo did subscribe to the Vedanta's view that divinity is both immanent in the cosmos and transcendent. In other words, whereas everything that exists is as a result of the divine, the divine itself is not limited by its own creation.

Then there is the problem of cosmogenesis. Here Aurobindo has a very interesting and original approach. He subscribed to the theory of spiritual evolution, that it is only because the godhead plunged into the densest matter that there was an involution from which an evolution can take place. Something cannot evolve out of nothing, and the fact that the spirit has evolved from the cosmos means that at some stage the spirit must have been fully involved in it, must have plunged into the opposite pole to pure consciousness which is the densest matter. First, then, there is matter pervaded by the divinity but not conscious at all of its inherent nature. After millions of years, as a result of certain inner forces, life makes its appearance, first as algae and amoebas and then, as science tells us, with increasing complexity there is a gradual movement upwards on the evolutionary ladder. Again after millions of years, mind starts making its appearance, and with the advent of



mind there is an important leap in the evolutionary process. With the advent of man, a thinking being, there appears on the scene at last a creature who can become aware of his own existence.

A rock is not aware of its existence, an animal is only vaguely aware of its existence, but with man we come to a creature who can, as the *Upanishads* say, look within and become aware of what in fact is a nucleus of his being. However, according to Aurobindo, man too, despite his remarkable capacities, is not the peak of creation, its final form. He is in fact an intermediate creature on the evolutionary ladder, with one part of his being still deep in matter, in animal consciousness, and the other striving and stretching upwards towards the divine. He is the hinge between the conscious and the superconscious.

Aurobindo postulates that above our present level of consciousness there are other levels reaching up to the divine. The destiny of man now is to take the leap from his present limited mental consciousness to the luminous sphere of the superconscious. The difference in this leap is that, whereas evolution hitherto has been largely blind, now man has the capacity to speed up the evolutionary process, to telescope millions of years of blind evolution into a much shorter time-span. Therefore, according to Aurobindo, the truest destiny of man is to take the next leap forward into the supramental. But this will be a quantum leap, because man to superman is going to be a larger leap than from animal to man. The new leap into the divine consciousness will be a climactic one, and Aurobindo says that his *yoga* is essentially geared to this end. We thus have in Aurobindo the Vedantist, we have

his theory of cosmogenesis, and we have his anthropogenesis, the creation of man and his role in the spiritual destiny of the cosmos. And we have the leap from manhood to supermanhood, from the mental to the supramental.

There are very interesting corollaries to this new leap. There is, to begin with, a reconciliation between matter and spirit. In the same way as Einstein reconciled energy and matter in the famous equation  $E=mc^2$ , according to Aurobindo once the supramental level is reached, the dichotomy between matter and spirit disappears. In fact the relationship is something like that between water and ice. Matter is spirit which is visible, and spirit is matter in a different shape; there is no real difference between the two. Then there is a reconciliation of many of the problems that face mankind today, many of which were not solvable at all at the mental level of consciousness. Unless a step forward is taken on the evolutionary ladder, these problems can simply *not* be reconciled, because human consciousness itself is so limited and imperfect at this level. It is like an aeroplane entering a zone of turbulence which is very bumpy, and it is only when you transcend that zone that you finally come into a calm and quiet area. While you are in the turbulent zone, you can be the best pilot in the world, you can have the biggest plane in the world, nevertheless you will get knocked and bumped around. It is only when you transcend that zone of turbulence that you will be able to get into the atmosphere of peace and tranquillity. Similarly Aurobindo felt that the present human consciousness was a zone of turbulence because of the imperfections and limitations inherent in the mental



consciousness, and only by transcending it you can get into the zone of tranquillity.

Now the question arises as to how this is to take place, how does one move upwards on the evolutionary scale. This is where Aurobindo postulated what he called his *integral yoga*, an instrument whereby a few people, to begin with, could start to move into the rarefied atmosphere of the supramental consciousness. His goal is not individual liberation. Indeed, he felt that we have had a lot of individual liberation in this country with great sages and saints who achieved realization but whose passing left the world very much as it was. What Aurobindo wanted to do was to bring about a new state of consciousness in the world, nothing less than a "new heaven and a new earth." I do not think any philosopher in the history of the world has ever postulated a goal of this nature. The only parallel that strikes me is that of Visvamitra in ancient times who tried his own *srishti*, a new creation, because he was dissatisfied with the creation as it was. To achieve the desired transformation of the very texture of the world, Aurobindo perfected and put into practice his *integral yoga*.

But what is *integral yoga*? First a complete surrender to the divine, not only mental or physical but of all parts in our being. The second movement would be the ascent of human consciousness to the sphere of the supramental through various yogic disciplines. After the ascent, the yogi would try to absorb this supramental consciousness and return to earth with that power and that light so that the force of the supramental is brought to bear directly upon this level of consciousness. That is the third movement of the *yoga*, and it is

extremely important because Aurobindo always said that a lot of other people have ascended but have gone out, whereas what he wanted to do was to come back with the power, light and glory of the supramental upon this terrestrial consciousness so as to hasten the transformation of man and effect the next leap in the evolutionary process.

These, as I see them, are the broad contours of what Aurobindo wanted to do, and his yoga is integral because it comprehends every aspect of human endeavour. Traditional *bhakti* is a part of it, for unless emotions flow nothing can happen. What is involved is essentially the power, light and glory of the spirit itself, and without the emotions yoked to the chariot of yoga it is not possible to move forward. Then there is *gyana*, the spiritual wisdom, which is essential without which *bhakti* itself can degenerate into sheer sentimentalism. Then there is *karma*, and in the Sri Aurobindo Ashrama everybody is given a sphere of activity in which to work out his *yoga*. There is also the *Rajayoga*, the mystic system whereby through certain practices man comes into contact with higher states of being and consciousness.

Integral yoga covers all these and all aspects of life, art and literature, politics and science, and everything that you do. Some people feel that it would be all right if only half an hour a day is kept apart for religion and that for the rest of the  $23\frac{1}{2}$  hours we may forget all about it; half an hour for lunch, 15 minutes for breakfast, 45 minutes for dinner, and half an hour for God! Perhaps this half an hour for God is better than nothing at all. But if one has to make a real movement upwards, one has got to integrate one's personality around the



nucleus of one's spiritual endeavour. One must integrate all one's activities, however non-religious or religious they may appear, around the one central core. As one very great man whom I know puts it, it is like a series of concentric circles with the nucleus in the middle. Whatever you do, the centre must remain the same. If the circles are concentric, you can go as far as you like, but you will never go away from the centre. But if the circles become eccentric, the whole personality goes out of gear and one becomes a fractured, fragmented, and probably a neurotic personality.

Thus the spiritual quest is nothing if it is not a process of integration around the spiritual core. This I think is what Aurobindo meant when he talked of the integral yoga and of the necessity for a total one-pointed surrender to the divine. Here was a *yogi* whose system comprehended the entire planet. The question of its being confined only to a certain country or religion did not arise. As far as Aurobindo is concerned, it is immaterial as to what religion one follows; one can be a Christian, a Muslim, a Hindu or a Buddhist, or have no formal religion at all—it simply makes no difference whatsoever. What is needed is inner dedication to do the inner work.

Humanity today is at the crossroads. Man is going through a terrible crisis, walking as it were on the razor's edge, *khsurasyadhara*. But it is only by travelling that path that one will be able to reach any type of integration. It is not easy, but there is no other way. As the *Shvetashwatara Upanishad* has it:

*Vedahametam Purusham Mahantaam  
Adityavarnam Thamasasparastiat.*

*Tameva Veditva Atimrutyumeti*

*Nanyah Panthavidyate Anayaye.*

(I know that great being glowing with a thousand lights like unto the sun on the other shore beyond the darkness. It is only by knowing him one can attain immortality; there is no other way.)

This is the message of Aurobindo: to work one-pointedly towards the supramental transformation. Not all rocks have become animals, not all the animals have become men, and not all men are going to become supermen overnight. This is a task which only a few will be able to undertake, the path-finders, the great ones who are there shining effulgently and throwing light upon the path. Aurobindo is one of those great beings who come from time to time to show a new path and a new light to humanity. It is for us to try and derive whatever light we can from him and to follow the path, so that we can reach that glorious stage which the *Mundakopanishad* describes:

*Brahmaivedam Amrutam purastat*

*Brahma paschat Brahma Dakshina tas Chottarena*

*Adhashordham cha prassutam*

*Brahmaavidam visvam idam varishtam.*



## 4

### The Essence of Hinduism

The charge recently made by a friend and a wellknown newspaperman that "there is nothing egalitarian in the Hindu ethos" is a grossly unfair and inaccurate generalization. The fact is that the essence of Hinduism does not lie in caste and untouchability, howsoever much these social observances may have dominated Hindu society through the centuries. I do not wish to enter into the argument regarding the origin of the caste system or the obnoxious practice of untouchability.

It is quite clear that untouchability has no place whatsoever in a free, egalitarian society, and it has rightly been condemned by every Hindu social reformer from Raja Ramohun Roy to Mahatma Gandhi. It is banned in the constitution and despite a tremendous backlog of oppression the situation is gradually improving. Of course much more needs to be done to root this poison out of Hindu society. But to look upon

untouchability as the central feature of the Hindu ethos would be as distorted as to look upon the Inquisition and witch-hunting as the central features of the Christian ethos.

The essence of Hinduism lies, as stated in the *Upanishads* which are the high watermark of the Hindu mind, in the following four propositions:

(a) that the entire cosmos is a spiritual emanation, sprung from the divine, pervaded by the divine and yet not in any way limiting the fullness of divine plenitude;

(b) that there is within each human being, irrespective of caste or creed, race or colour, religion or nationality, a spark of the divine consciousness, whereby all man are verily "children of immortality";

(c) that the divine within (the microcosm) and the divine without (the macrocosm) are in fact the same; and

(d) that the highest destiny and goal of man is to unite his limited individual consciousness with the vast ocean of divinity that pervades the universe.

Looked at from this point of view, the aberrations of caste or the abominations of untouchability do not really touch the central core of Hinduism. It is very important that anyone who writes about Hinduism must grasp these fundamentals, which were relevant not only in the age of *Vedas* and the *Upanishads* but continue to be relevant to millions of people today. Whatever may or may not be the "Western connotation of civilization," the Hindu ethos despite all aberrations



and pressures is perhaps the only religious discipline to survive from the very dawn of civilization. Indeed the spiritual equality that it teaches is more egalitarian than perhaps any other concept known to man.

I am fully aware of the weaknesses of Hindu practice, and have no desire to gloss over the tremendous social and personal disabilities that various aspects of Hindu social customs have imposed through the centuries. However, living as we now are in a free nation based on the principles of justice, liberty, equality, and fraternity, we must increasingly shed the inessential encrustations that had gathered around the central core of Hindus over the last many centuries. Thereby it is my belief that Hinduism still has the power to provide inspiration and illumination to millions throughout the world, whether or not they formally belong to the Hindu faith.

## 5

### Art and Civilization

There are many indices to the performance of a civilization—gross national product, rate of economic growth, per capita income, level of industrialization, and so on—and all these indices are valid and valuable in their own sphere. But that intangible quality known as the inner quality of a civilization cannot be gauged by any of these indices. One of the best ways of judging the true inner state of a civilization is through its art, in the broader sense of the term—architecture, painting, culture, dance, drama, music, and above all literature.

Of all the arts, literature is the closest to the heart of the people. It has its deepest roots in the cultural heritage of a nation and, therefore, it is through literature that the greatness and genius of every nation displays itself through the ages. We in India are uniquely privileged, because whereas most other countries in the world have one or perhaps two languages as a vehicle for creative literature and artistic expression,



we have at least 20 different languages, all of which are used by a wide variety of people as a means for creative expression in different parts of the country.

It is one of the special merits of the Jnanpith award set up by the farsighted founders Shanti Prasad Jain and Rama Jain that it covers all the languages mentioned in the Constitution. It is perhaps unique in this regard, in two respects. Firstly, because of the size of the award itself—one lakh of rupees even in this age when the value of the rupee is rapidly dropping—is a substantial sum. But more unique than the sum is the fact that it is designed to cover the entire spectrum of creative work in Indian languages. And it has over the last four or five years become the most coveted literary award in the country. As you know, in 1966 the first award was given to G. Shankar Kurup, a Malayalam literateur; in 1967 it was Tarashankar Bandhopadhyaya, the great Bengali writer; in 1968 the award was divided between K.V. Puttappa and Umashankar Joshi—Kannada and Gujarati. In 1969 the great Hindi poet Sumitranandan Pant was the recipient of the award and in 1970, it was Firaq Gorakhpuri, one of the greatest figures of the Urdu world. I may clarify that it is not by rotation that we intend to give the award. It is after very careful consideration through a sophisticated process that a selection is finally made from among the outstanding works of literature in a certain period.

In 1971, the award has been given to the greatest contemporary Telugu writer, Vishwanath Satyanarayanan, for his magnificent *Ramayana Kapavrikshamu*. This has been introduced in a very interesting manner by P.V. Narasimha Rao, an erudite linguist, and it is

obviously a work of great merit being the capstone of a very distinguished literary career covering over fifty years and over 100 literary works.

The *Ramayana* is truly a *Kapavriksham* because through the centuries it has inspired crores of people in this country; it has inspired them in their daily life and in facing their daily problems. And this is because the *Ramayana*, an epic concerned with the art of living, was reinterpreted by every succeeding generation. It deals with men and women in situations which many of us face in our own lives.

Apart from the great central figure, Rama, who is the ideal image of the integrated man in life and society and of Sita who has been respected through the ages as the perfect woman, there are numerous other characters, a whole galaxy of extremely interesting people each in their own way throwing a flood of light on the art of living. Several have been mentioned by Narasimha Rao in his introductory remarks. For example, Kaikeyee and Bharat. I think it will be difficult in the literature of the world to find a more noble character, a more powerful character than that of Bharat. He may not be the hero of the epic but he is surely one of the greatest figures in any of the epics of the world. Then there is Urmila, the wife of Lakshmana. She may not have received the attention or the praise that Sita received, but her contribution and sacrifice was no less and the fact that she bore it without murmur, the fact that she stayed for fourteen years without her husband because he had gone in the pursuance of his duty, is a most ennobling and exciting facet of this great work.

In other words, the *Ramayana* teaches us a great deal



in our modern lives, our present lives—the relationship of man to his parents, wife, brothers, teachers, enemies, and friends. The art of living par excellence—living in sorrow and in joy, in prosperity and in adversity—because life after all is nothing if it is not a mosaic of sorrow and joy, of triumph and tragedy. And, therefore it is that the *Ramayana* is one of those immortal classics which have come down to us through the millennia and which are open to creative reinterpretation by every succeeding generation.

I think the definition of a classic would be one which not only inspires every succeeding generation but which can be creatively reinterpreted by each generation so that they can derive the maximum benefit from it. And that is why you find that today there are versions of the *Ramayana* in almost every Indian language; and generations living today and generations yet unborn will find in this great epic inspiration to better their lives, inspiration finally in the great symbolic conflict between Rama and Ravana symbolizing, as it were, the continuing struggle between the forces of harmony and disharmony, between the forces of light and darkness, between the forces of good and evil. Because, let us never forget that this is a battle that continues constantly. It is not a battle once fought and finished; it is a battle that each generation and each individual has to fight if he is to achieve anything worthwhile.

## 6

### On Happiness

A cartoon in a recent issue of the *New Yorker* sums it up devastatingly. It shows two senior executives upto their noses in graphs and documents, glaring at a third man leaving the room. One of them says to the other: "Now there goes a happy man, the damn fool." How true it is that many of us seem to have lost the capacity for happiness. We are so engrossed in the daily routine of life and so overwhelmed by the inflated importance we tend to give to our own role in running the world, that the capacity to be joyful is rapidly becoming a thing of the past. Perhaps this is more marked in the so-called advanced nations of the West than in India. But the disease of unhappiness seems to have hit at least our metropolitan centres and will probably grow steadily in the years to come.

The unhappiness that I speak of is not connected with material possessions. In fact, one can still find in the villages and fields of India a spontaneous joy that



has largely evaporated from the cities. Among politicians in particular there is the tendency to feel that happiness is a luxury which must be strictly avoided, and that an involvement in public life necessarily implies not only a lack of joy but, worse still, a lack of humour. My own view is that the reverse is true. If we are to succeed in any measure in lightening the burden of others, we must first develop within ourselves the capacity to respond joyously to beauty.

Despite all the poverty that there is in India, ours is still one of the most beautiful countries in the world. Even the simple phenomena of daily life—the sunrise with its glowing promise and the mellow colours of the sunset, the glorious pageant of the starry heavens at night and of the moon that is always changing—can be sources of great joy. For those who are privileged to live in the mountains, the sight of tranquil lakes and the sound of running water is matched only by the laughter of children. But the faculty to perceive beauty and derive joy from it is one that seems in modern man to be growing increasingly dormant. Indeed this is one of the weakest aspects of our education; we try and teach children a great deal about a number of extraneous matters, but neglect to teach them how to perceive beauty and respond creatively to it.

Many people of late are drawing longer faces than ever before. Thus a brilliant intellectual with a really fine mind has become so used to looking at the gloomy side of events that he has become a veritable prophet of doom, dismissing as unreal any sort of silver lining that may be pointed out to him. A young housewife, happily married with a fine husband and children, is going through a phase in which nothing she does seems

to bring her real happiness. Such instances can be multiplied infinitely. The point is not that things are not difficult, that corruption is not rampant, that manipulation has not become virtually a way of life. The point is that despite all the imperfections around us and in us we simply cannot afford the luxury of despair or pessimism.

The quest for happiness is as old as the human race itself, and will continue until the last human being is alive on this planet. There are many definitions of happiness, but although a certain level of material welfare is essential it is quite clear that happiness is not to be had simply by a proliferation of possessions. Thousands of years ago the *Upanishads* recorded that man could never be satisfied by wealth, and that the only true form of enjoyment was by renunciation. This doctrine was later developed in the *Bhagavad Gita* as renunciation not so much of objects as of the fruits of action. Be that as it may, it would be a real disaster if we became like those very important people in the cartoon, so full of our self-importance and vain glory that we automatically look upon any happy person as a fool.

Within each individual, we are told, is the true fount of happiness, not merely at the exterior level of physical satiation but in deeper and deeper levels culminating finally in the great *ananda* of self-realization. The cobwebs of our inhibitions, the constrictions of our social and political activities, the masks that we put on in the course of our daily lives, all these are swept away in the onrush of the mighty *ananda* that beats like an ocean at the deepest levels of our consciousness.

But before we can reach the ocean we have to first discover the tiny spring of joy that bubbles within us,



and then follow the path of its crystal stream as it makes its way laboriously, but surely, towards its destination. More, not less, idealism is the answer to man's dilemma in this nuclear age.

## Human Unity

The concept of human unity is as old as civilization itself. In the *Rigveda*, for example, there is a reference to *Vasudhaiv Kutumbukam* (the world as a family) and there is no doubt that such references can be multiplied in other scriptures produced by the human race in its long and tortuous evolution on this planet.

But it is only in this age, with the breakthrough in science and technology, that it has become within the realm of possibility to convert into reality what was only a concept in the minds of saints and thinkers. The breakthrough in aviation technology, rocketry and space travel has contributed to the development of this concept of Spaceship Earth—a single ecosystem, a single unity—and more and more people are beginning to realize that unless the world is in fact looked upon as a single unit and unless human unity becomes a living reality, the future of the world will be gravely endangered.



The great conference held in Stockholm in 1972 on human environment, addressed so eloquently by Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, was among the most signal ways in which the nations of the world expressed their growing anxiety about this problem.

Unfortunately, this awareness is only partial. Indeed the dilemma of modern man lies in the fact that on the one hand we have all the technological pre-requisites for human unity, but on the other, the old, narrow and primitive concepts of dividing the human race on the basis of ideology, colour, race or religion still persist. The armaments race has resulted in the accumulation of so much destructive weaponry that it would be sufficient to wipe out the entire human race many times over. There is also a mass psychosis and neurosis in many countries of the world, because man is getting further and further away from his instinctive roots.

However, whether or not the human race will survive is still an open question. We now know that life exists on millions of other planets, and if it ceases to exist on this planet of ours it may not seriously upset the cosmic order. But as human beings, we must be committed not only to the survival of the human race and the elimination of sub-human conditions wherever they exist, but also to the continuous unfolding of the mystery of human personality, to the continuous movement of the human towards the divine.

Perhaps it is in response to this tremendous challenge the world faces today that we find this turmoil everywhere. Old ideologies and formulations are breaking down and there is a craving for new certitudes. The old is dying, the new is struggling to be born, and our gene-

ration finds itself precariously poised between the past and the future. The quest in science is particularly great. Through astro-physics we are looking into the farthest reaches of the universe and through microbiology into the very structure of the cell, the gene, the chromosome, into the very smallest formulation of matter and energy. But what is required is *weltanschauung* (a world view) which can combine the insights of science and technology and those of philosophy and religion into a new formulation, a new integration of the fractured psyche of man around a spiritual principle, so that the human adventure does not come to a fiery end in a nuclear holocaust but is enabled to progress further until man can fulfil his destiny.

Many great thinkers—men of religion, science, and philosophy—have approached this problem from differing points of view. But it would be correct to say that among the most fascinating approach has been that of Sri Aurobindo, a truly remarkable man born a hundred years ago, an amazing man even in the most amazing 100 years the human race has ever witnessed. He began as an ardent prophet of Indian nationalism but soon transcended all barriers of nation or religion and comprehended within his grasp the entire human race. He has left behind a corpus of poetry and prose writings which represents one of the high water marks of the human spirit. His thought has many insights and I would like to mention only three or four particular aspects.

Aurobindo gave a new meaning to the theory of evolution. According to him, the growth of life on this planet, from mineral to vegetable, to animal and ultimately to man is a part of the great unfolding of the



divine spirit. With man we peak of creation, but essentially to an intermediate creature whose feet are still deep in matter but whose mind reaches out into the divine—a creature who, for the first time, is self-conscious, howsoever dimly, who can look before and after and can, if he so desires, cooperate with the evolutionary principle in order to bring about the next quantum leap in evolution.

It is here that Aurobindo's contribution is particularly important. He holds that unless man transcends his present condition, much as the animal has been transcended in the advent of man, and moves towards supermanhood, away from the purely mental towards supramental plane, it will not in the ultimate analysis be possible to solve the problem of the human race. He has described at length the processes whereby this new quantum leap, which he calls integral *yoga*, can be taken. He has also described the luminous reality of truth consciousness where intuition and direct cognition will take the place of the present imperfect reasoning intellect.

In this vast orchestra of evolution, Aurobindo rejected the concept of individual salvation as also of mass salvation. If I understand him correctly, it was the transmutation of our terrestrial consciousness itself, the creation, as he puts it, of a new heaven and a new earth. Thus, there is in Aurobindo's thought a powerful current and a forward-movement which can be of tremendous relevance to presentday man.

Very often people of philosophy and religion are dismissed as being merely idealistic dreamers who refuse to face the realities of life and wish to escape into some cave or on to some mountain peak. But Aurobindo's

integral *yoga* and the development of his philosophy necessitates the most intense activity in the world itself, which is directed towards producing a new reality and a new order of being in which there will be the final reconciliation between matter and spirit, between thinking and feeling, between the human and the divine.

As I see it, this is the broad, overpowering spirit of Aurobindo's thought. It is to be hoped that the modern world will benefit from Aurobindo's thought and work towards a movement which is so urgently required in the world today. The movement towards human unity is no longer an idealistic dream, or the fancy of a poet or seer, but a dire necessity if the human race is to survive at all. Man is destined not for annihilation but for a new movement forwards into new vistas of glory and achievement.



## 8

### Knowledge and Wisdom

ओ३म् भद्रं कर्णेभिः शृणुयाम देवाः भद्रं पश्येमाक्षभिर्यजत्राः ।  
स्थिरैरङ्गैस्तुष्टुवा ७ सस्तनूभिर् व्यशेमहि देवहितं यदायुः ॥

In the *Mundakopanishad*, it is recorded that Shaunaka, the great householder, went one day to Angiras, the seer, and having paid the homage that is due from temporal power to spiritual power, he asked:

कस्मिन्नु भगवो विज्ञाते सर्वमिदं विज्ञातं भवतीति ।  
(What is that by knowing which everything becomes known?)

The seer answered:

द्वे विद्ये वेदितव्ये इतिह स्म यद् ब्रह्मविदो वदन्ति,  
परा चैवापरा च ॥

(There are two forms of knowledge of which those who know Brahman have spoken; the higher and the lower)

What in modern terms can be called knowledge and wisdom? It seems to me that the dilemma of man in this nuclear age is the growing gap between knowledge and wisdom. Although there has been a tremendous explosion of knowledge, there has been no corresponding growth in wisdom. And Sanskrit, the greatest living classical language in the world today which has through the centuries been the vehicle for some of the most profound flights of human mind and imagination, provides a key both to the lower and higher knowledge and also a bridge between these two which modern man can use to tremendous advantage.

India today is independent, if it stands proudly among the comity of nations, it is very largely because of the contribution that Sanskrit has made to the culture and history of this nation. It has provided the living link with the dawn of our civilization that continues down till the present day. Whenever in our long and tortuous history dark clouds have gathered over India, it was largely through Sanskrit that a new light, faith and hope has been given to us. Just as the Ganga has been a source of life to millions, Sanskrit also has arisen at the dawn of our civilization and is flowing eternally towards the ocean, in the process giving life and vigour to our nation.

I would submit, however, that Sanskrit has never been confined to India alone. Sanskrit has always accepted the best from every direction: आ नो भद्राः कृतवो यन्तु विश्वतः (Let noble thoughts come to us from every side.) Sanskrit has overflowed the physical boundaries of India into central Asia, south Asia, south-east Asia, and has spread its impact far and wide. One of the great epics of human achievement has been



the diffusion of Sanskrit, and through Sanskrit the ideals it has expressed, throughout a very large portion of the civilized world—whether it is distant Siberia or Mongolia, China or Japan, Indonesia or Indo-china, apart from the countries which are in the neighbourhood of India—Afghanistan, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal, Ceylon, Burma, and Bhutan. Everywhere Hinduism or Buddhism has gone in the ages past, Sanskrit has been the major vehicle for carrying the message.

Then again, a superb role has been played by western Orientologists in the rediscovery of Sanskrit in the modern age, and I would like to place on record that this country is deeply indebted to these great scholars who, coming from distant lands, very often not even visiting India, nevertheless played such a tremendous role in the rediscovery of Sanskrit in the modern world; men like Schlegel and Chezy, Max Mueller and Monier Williams, Alexander Hamilton and William Jones, Petrov and Menaev. The list is a long one and it is very difficult to choose, but these are the people who in modern times have rediscovered Sanskrit for us. Otherwise, as a result of foreign domination, this great heritage would have been lost not only to India but to the world, because Sanskrit is a part of the heritage of the entire world and not confined to India alone.

I believe that there are four fundamental levels on which Sanskrit can be evaluated in the modern age. First, of course, its superb linguistic structure. Thanks to the *trimuni*—Panini, Patanjali, and Katyayana—that Sanskrit has a linguistic and phonetic structure of unrivalled beauty and perfection. Therefore the study

of this structure, for itself and for the relationship that it bears to other great classical languages of the Indo-European family and languages belonging to other families, is of tremendous and continuing significance. It is a living laboratory of linguistics and phonetics, because Sanskrit is a language that is classical but still very much alive.

Then there are the literary glories of Sanskrit, multifaceted and many-splendoured. Valmiki, Vyasa, and Vishvanatha; Kalidasa, Kapila, and Kalhana; Jayadeva, Jaimini, and Jagannatha; Bhavabhuti, Bhasa and Bharata; Asvaghosa, Abhinavagupta and Anandavardhana; Vatsyayana, Visakhadatta, and Vidyadhara; the list is endless. The corpus of Sanskrit literature covers the whole gamut of human experience, it is by no means confined to grammar or what is known as philosophy. Every human emotion and aspiration, every beat of the human heart, every flight of the human mind, the joys and sorrows of humanity are to be found in Sanskrit literature, and this makes it continuously meaningful in the modern age.

Next, there is a corpus of knowledge which is relevant and valid in modern studies. For example, in art and architecture, music and dancing, astronomy and medicine, yoga and the whole gamut of psychology and depth psychology, in all these fields works in Sanskrit have made original contributions which need to be carefully assessed and integrated into our contemporary storehouse of knowledge.

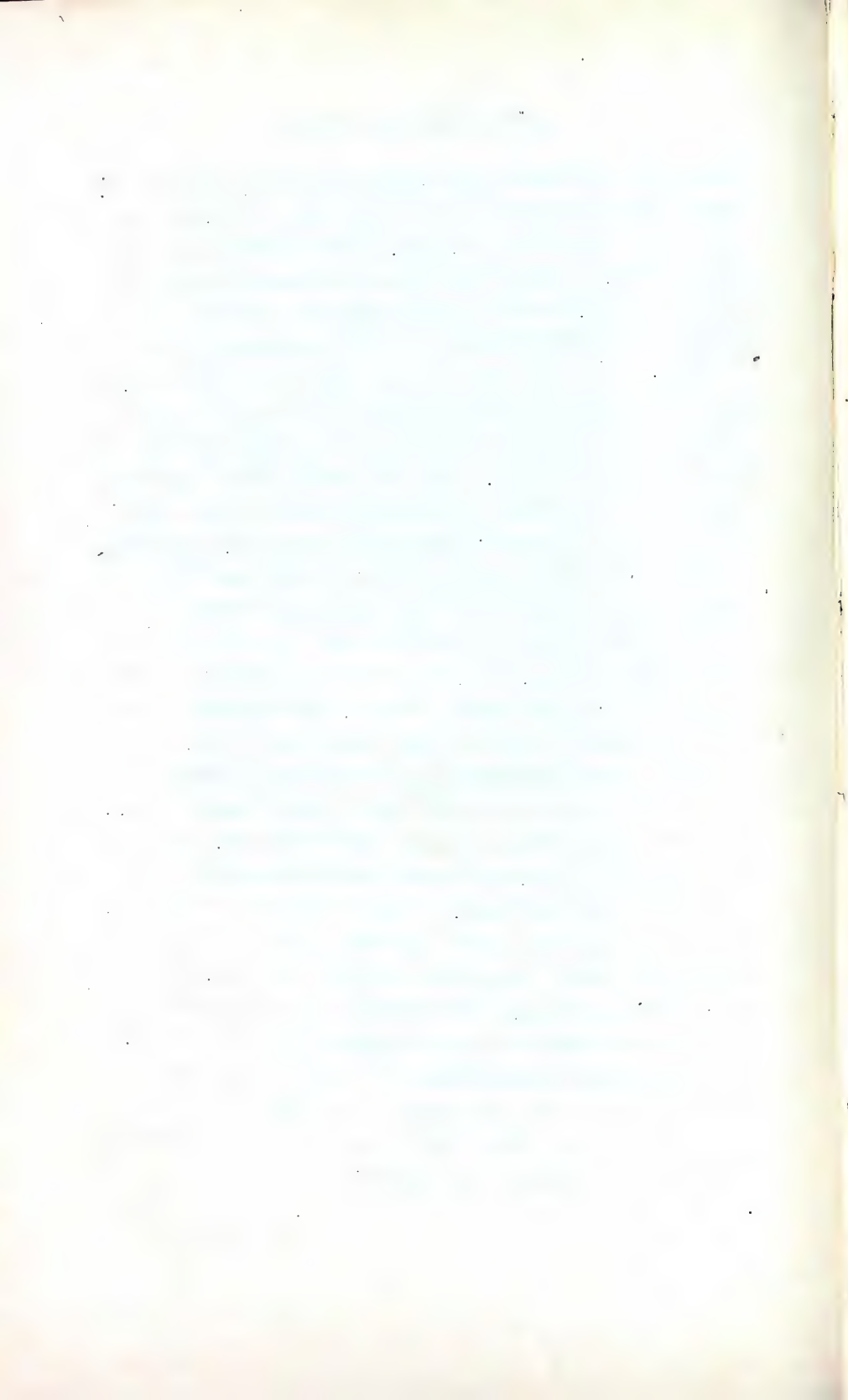
Finally, of course, we come to the *para vidya*, the higher knowledge. Modern man today is on a crucial crossroads. After centuries man has emerged with tremendous power. He has the power, if he uses it



wisely, to abolish misery and poverty, suffering and degradation from the face of this earth. Yet the same power, if misused, can annihilate all life upon this planet, and if even a fraction of the nuclear weapons that are piled up were to explode, it would be enough to destroy not only Sanskrit but the entire human race.

Therefore, what man needs today is wisdom and a new vision. Sanskrit has given such a vision. It has the vision of the divinity of man. Not only the divinity of God, because if God exists He is divine by definition and there is nothing very special about it. But as far as the divinity of man is concerned, every human being carries with him a spark of that divinity—a spark of that unique potentiality. The *Upanishads* have a marvellous phrase for mankind — अमृतस्य पुत्राः (children of immortality). And then there is the concept of the family of man, the unity of man, वसुधैव कुटुम्बकम्, a concept that cuts across all barriers of caste and creed, religion and nationality, race or political ideology; a vision that unites mankind into a single family. And it is this vision, this wisdom that is required today to heal the fractured psyche of man in the nuclear age.

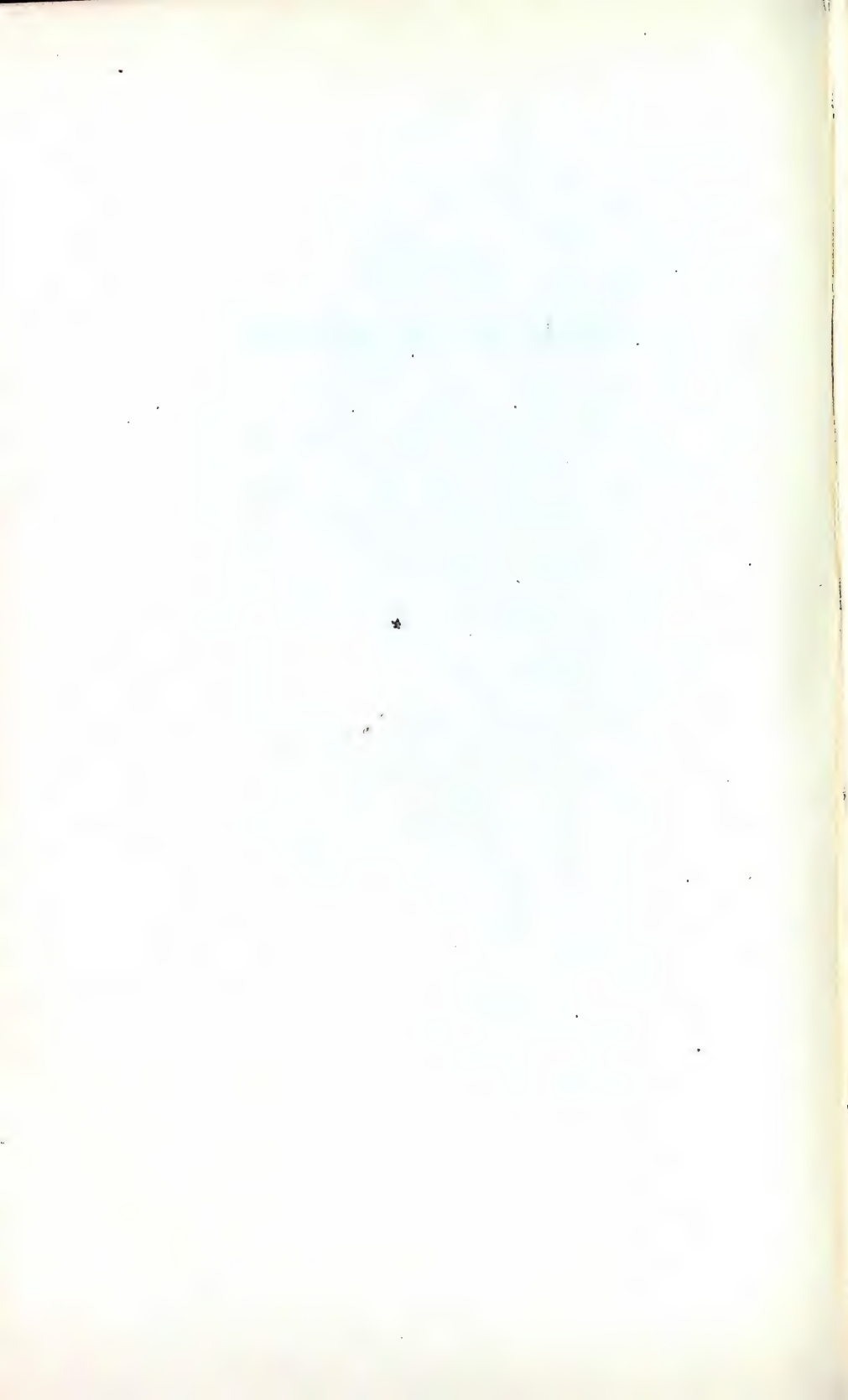
This is what we need if man is to survive his own ingenuity and to move into the future. There are difficulties on the way, the voices of doom and destruction call from all sides. But for man, the eternal pilgrim, there is no waiting, there is no tarrying by the wayside. He must push on regardless of the difficulties, secure in the knowledge that ultimately the victory will be his, secure in the wisdom which has come down to us through the medium of Sanskrit.





SECTION II

INDIA IN TRANSITION



## 9

### Socialism in Ancient India

The words *socialist* and *socialism* came into use in Great Britain and France soon after 1825. The terms were first applied to the doctrines of certain writers who were seeking a complete transformation of the economic and moral basis of society by substitution of social for individual control, and of social for individualistic forces in the organization of life and work. Socialism is both a movement and a theory, and takes different forms under different historical and local conditions. Turning the pages of history we find that the essential basis of Indian thought for ages past, though not in some of its later manifestations, fits in with the scientific temper and approach of socialism. It is based on a fearless search for truth, solidarity of man based upon the divinity of every living thing, and on the free and cooperative development of the individual and the species, leading to greater freedom and higher stages of human growth.



Indeed, the plastic conservatism of Indian civilization and culture is the secret of its survival in the face of frequent and powerful onslaughts over the centuries. Such concepts as *bahujana sukhaya*, *bahujana hitaya cha* (happiness and welfare of the masses), *Sarva bhut heteratah* (engaged in promoting the welfare of all beings) occurring in the *Upanishads* and the *Gita*, and prayers such as *Sarvepi sukhinah santu*, *sarve santu niramaya sarva bhadraṇi pashyantu ma kashchit dukhman bhavet* (may everyone be happy, free from suffering and disease, may all be blessed with auspicious sights) show clearly the deep stream of humanism and devotion to the common good which flows throughout the ancient literature and culture of India. This, of course, is in sharp contradistinction to the rigidities of caste; and has acted as a softening and leavening factor in Indian culture through the ages..

The first important feature of the old economic order in India was the division of the country into villages where the large majority of people lived and continue to live today. The goal of democratic socialism as adopted by the Bhubaneswar Congress of January 1964 can be traced back to the various kinds of assemblies, guilds, and panchayats which flourished in ancient India. Ancient Indian literature often mentions tribe republics, and these are usually referred to as *gana* or *sangha*. Some of them were small city-states, while the territories of others were fairly big. Early Buddhist works mention many such republican tribes who were living at the time of the Buddha (566-486 B.C.). Among these are the Sakyas of Kapilavastu, the Bhargas of Sisumara Giri, the Bulis of Allakappa, the Kalamas of Kisaputra, the Koliyas of Ramagrama, the Mallas of

Kusenagara, the Mallas of Pava, the Mauryas of Pippalivana, the Vidhas of Mithila, and the Licchavis and Vrijis of Vaishali. Kautilya's *Arthasastra* mentions two classes of *sangha*, the first of which was associated with Khsatriyas, and the second with the Kambojas and Surastras who adopted the professions of trade, agriculture, and cattle-rearing and fighting.

Little is known about the functioning of administration in the early Indian republican states, though Buddhist literature offers us bits of information about the Shakya and Vrji-Licchavi administration as well as the functioning of the Buddhist *sangha*. The Jain *Kalpa-sutra* speaks of the nine Mallakis, the nine Licchavis, and the eighteen ganarajas of Kasi and Kosala. The Greek authors who describe the campaigns of Alexander in India between 327 and 324 B.C. speak of a large number of republicans and oligarchical tribes in the area which is now Pakistan. The form of their government was democratic and not regal. Again, according to Megasthenes (fourth century B.C.) who lived at the court of Chandragupta Maurya, many of the Indian cities at that time adopted the democratic form of government; tribes like the Malticorae and the Singhae and those who lived near the sea had no kings. These views are supported by the fact that tribal republics and city-states flourished in India down to the fourth century A.D. and also that they existed even during the hegemony of the Kusanas, when they apparently owed allegiance to this imperial power.

The republican rule seems to have received a setback during the reign of the Guptas, and we do not hear of such states after them. However, the republican tradition was maintained by certain assemblies, includ-



ing guilds or panchayats of various types which have come down to our own times. While on this subject of institutions influenced by democratic ideas, we are reminded of the *sabha* and the *samiti* mentioned in Vedic literature and in a large number of south Indian inscriptions also.

In a country like India where the whole ancient system was founded upon a close participation of all the orders or sections in the common life, socialism can be said to be a basic concept of socio-political life. There is reason to believe that in the early stages of its development even the caste system was fluid in character. How exactly this original fluidity was lost is a question incapable of precise determination. Whatever may be the case, it is quite clear that caste is antagonistic to the principle of equality, social justice, and to the growth of socialism, particularly in its odious corollary of untouchability, and therefore it should whither away as early as possible. This is a national problem which needs the concerted attack of all political parties and the revival of a public movement of social reform and emancipation.

"The only key to the solution of the world problems and of India's problems lies in socialism . . . in the scientific economic sense," observed Jawaharlal Nehru, "I see no way of ending the poverty, the vast unemployment, the degradation and the subjection of the Indian people except through socialism." We have to remember afresh the core of our ancient wisdom and adapt it to our present circumstances. We have to revive the passion for truth and beauty and freedom which gives meaning to life, and develop afresh that dynamic outlook and spirit of adventure which distinguished those



of our race who, in ages past, built our civilization on these strong and enduring foundations. Old as we are with memories stretching back to the early dawn of human history and endeavour, we have to grow young again in tune with our present time, with the irresistible spirit and joy of youth in the present and its faith in the future.

Truth has ever to be sought and renewed, reshaped and developed so that, as understood by man, it might keep in line with the growth of his thought and the development of human life. Only then does it become a living truth for humanity, supplying the essential need for which it craves and offering guidance in the present and for future. In India we have to develop a form of democratic socialism suited to our peculiar cultural and historical traditions so that, based firmly in our best ancient heritage, we can move forward boldly and rapidly to the new goals that await our people.

# 10

## The Indian Revolution

As in the case of other great revolutions—the French, American, Russian, and the Chinese—in India too a fullfledged and valid revolution is in progress. The Indian revolution dates back of course to the Indian renaissance; the great movement started by Raja Rammohun Roy which swept to a triumphant conclusion under Mahatma Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru, and other great national leaders. This independence movement had its own ideology, a very definite commitment to social, economic, and political goals and ideals, and formed the basis for the development of the Indian revolution in the last quarter of the century since 1947.

The unique experiment we have undertaken in parliamentary democracy and social transformation is truly remarkable, despite many difficulties and setbacks and the fact that we have had to fight as many as five wars since independence and there have been years of drought and other natural calamities. However, we

have emerged from these many difficulties successfully, and the parliamentary system itself has played a central role in the development of the Indian revolution. At times when one reads in the press or hears intellectual conversation in coffee houses and elsewhere, one feels as if India has completely deteriorated over the last quarter century.

This totally negative and doomsday-oriented attitude is unfortunate. I am fully aware of the weaknesses in our system; the corruption that unfortunately has become increasingly widespread in our national life, the wide gap between precept and practice, and other weaknesses of organization and implementation. But if you take the broad picture, you will find that our revolution remains a viable one. It is still far from complete, of course, but nonetheless it is trying to bring to fruition many of the ideas and ideals for which we worked in the course of our national movement. People are so involved in the complexities of day-to-day life that there is a tendency to lose sight of the broad picture. It is this broad picture of the revolution that needs to be briefly surveyed.

There are three major aspects which merit consideration. The first is the political revolution. In the last 25 years there has been an unprecedented increase in mass involvement in our democratic processes. In the early part of the freedom struggle the national movement was something which was confined to certain classes and castes, and though Gandhi was able to enthuse the vast masses of this country, the real practice of continuing mass political involvement has come only after independence. It is really a remarkable thing today that when we travel the length and



breadth of India we find that people are agog with expectations and are actively involved in trying to better their lot. This is itself a pre-requisite for any substantial and meaningful development. We have been able, over the last 25 years, to achieve this mass involvement in the political processes. Each successive general election, despite difficulties and problems, has marked a major milestone in the development of political maturity of the Indian people who have proved that, although by western norms they may yet be illiterate and although by sophisticated statistics it may be proved that their rate of growth is among the lowest in the world, they have in fact shown tremendous maturity over the years after freedom.

We are sometimes accused of having aroused expectations among the people and not being able to fulfil them. We deliberately aroused the expectations because it is part of the political process. I travel often in my constituency—a farflung area covering over seven thousand square miles which is bigger than perhaps many of the member states of the United Nations—and I have deliberately placed before the people the possibility of improvement in their lives. We have said to the people that it is possible not only for you to have a better life but for your children also; it is possible for you to have schools and to have roads, to have hospitals and to be better dressed and to live as better Indians. Certainly we have aroused expectations, because if we had not done so the entire power and thrust of the revolution would have been blunted. Expectations will doubtless grow much quicker than our capacity to fulfil them. That is inevitable and is true even in the most affluent of nations. The *Upanishads* said thousands of years ago,

"Man is never satisfied by wealth." But with our desperate poverty we have aroused expectations as a deliberate act of policy, as part of our political revolution, so that our people should strive for a better life for themselves and their children.

Again, on the question of national integration the prophets of doom abroad and, more irritatingly, at home are constantly saying that India is on the verge of breaking up and there will be terrible disasters all around. Yet we find that every single time the country has faced a crisis, the people of India have shown that despite their differences national integration in this country is as strong as in any country of the world. The incorrigible prophets of doom who are constantly bemoaning that the country is on the verge of destruction are in fact weakening the psychological fibre of our people. Despite all the differences in our languages, religions, customs, and in our ways of living, India has shown that it is one. This is a tremendous achievement, one which should not be underestimated. Thus, the two main prerequisites for the furtherance of our political revolution—involvement of the masses and strengthening of national unity—are therefore present.

The second aspect of the Indian revolution is social change. Here again there have been tremendous changes since 1947. The joint family, for example, has broken very rapidly and the nuclear family—which includes husband, wife, and children—is coming to the fore. In my view, this nuclear family was the prerequisite for the woman as such to play an active and equal role in national life, because in the joint family only one of the women was predominant while the others were in a satellite position.



Therefore, the breakup of the joint family and the emergence of the nuclear family is one of the major sociological changes in the last 25 years, and it has occurred by and large very smoothly. There have been difficulties, of course, there have been heartbreaks and problems of adjustment, but these are always there in any basic structural change.

With regard to caste, it is clear that since 1947 caste rigidities have considerably decreased. Untouchability has not been completely removed from this country; to make such a claim would be untrue and unrealistic. But there has been tremendous improvement and by and large the rigidities of the caste system have begun to break down and a much more emancipated and enlightened attitude is beginning to emerge. The feudal order has virtually disappeared and the individual and the smaller peasants are beginning to come into their own. The workers are better organized than before and, without going into an extended sociological analysis, it is possible to assert that social transformation which is an essential part of the Indian revolution has taken major strides since 1947.

We come, then, to the third vital aspect of the revolution which is economic. I have no intention of going into details in this regard. I will only say that in the last 20 years of planned development we have made impressive strides, although a large amount of that progress has been swallowed up by the increase in population which has been one of our major weaknesses. Had our population rise been slower, the actual per capita increase in income would have been much more impressive. Nevertheless, we have pursued our policy of democratic socialism despite many difficulties and



by and large we have many achievements to our credit. Of course a great deal more needs to be done. We have just embarked on our Fifth Five-Year Plan which is going to be a major effort towards eradicating poverty. In the Approach Paper to the Fifth Plan there is a sentence which sums up what it is we are trying to do: "The Fifth Plan is much more than an internally consistent mathematical exercise. It is conceived as a rallying point for the supreme national effort in the decisive phase of our struggle for a self-reliant economy and for social justice. It is another war that the country has to fight and win, the war on poverty and dependence and stagnation."

I am aware that the country recently faced a severe drought and it must also be remembered that we are paying the price of the 1971 war. This is something which has not been adequately mentioned on public platforms. The war in 1971 which we won with such tremendous valour has nevertheless to be taken into account in considering our economic situation. Much of the difficulty we are facing today on the economic front is due to two things which came together—the impact of the war and the fact that the rains in 1972 failed in many areas. In any case, our capacity to withstand economic burdens has considerably increased, and in the Fifth Plan we are going to move forward much more rapidly.

While on the economic aspect, I would like to mention the increasingly crucial role that the public sector is going to play in the development of the national economy. Indeed, I would not hesitate to say that it is the public sector which, in the ultimate analysis, will decide whether or not our experiment in democratic

socialism is going to succeed. Here, the public view is often clouded by reports which, though perhaps not deliberately biased, certainly contain an element of bias. I will just give you one example. When I took up the Ministry of Tourism I inherited some public sector hotels. Several editorials came out asking how it was possible for the government to run hotels efficiently in the public sector and asserting that bureaucracy and redtape would ruin their functioning. In the first two years when the hotels were losing money, we read a number of articles rubbing in this point. A little later, it so happened that some public sector hotels began making handsome profits. However, I have not seen any editorial or report in any of the newspapers lauding the public sector performance. When the public sector loses, everybody makes a big noise even though there may be perfectly legitimate reasons for the loss. But when the public sector makes profit, nobody has got the interest or the courage to say anything about it. It is, indeed, painful when the attitude of the intelligentsia in India, especially in Delhi, reflects this doomsday spirit. I know we have our weaknesses, but we should get credit for wherever we are moving in the right direction. Our public sector works, for example, are struggling against tremendous difficulties and still making good. Air India has only a dozen planes in comparison with hundreds belonging to the major foreign airlines. Ever since Air India was nationalized in 1953, right up to 1970 it constantly earned profits which is a unique record. Now when we went in for a very major expansion and bought four jumbo jets at a cost of Rs 100 crores, we have for the last two years been making a loss. This is now being highlighted, forgetting the



earlier remarkable performance. What I am pleading for is a fair, not generous, assessment of the public sector.

Another point I would like to make is that labour-management relations are crucial for the success of both the private and the public sectors. The responsibility is of the management to adopt a cooperative attitude and management practices, as well as of organized labour to behave with restraint and responsibility. When we have millions of unemployed people, the employed are in a way the privileged class, and if they continue to demand more and more and create problems in the working of the economy, the viability of the economic system cannot be maintained.

A third point to be reiterated in regard to the economic revolution is that population growth has simply got to be brought in check, otherwise all that we are doing is getting diluted in the vast ocean of increasing numbers. I am not one of those who subscribe to the view that large numbers are necessarily a source of weakness. They are not. Manpower can be a great source of strength, but at this particular stage of our development our population is so high that we have got to bring down the rate of growth if our economic experiment is to succeed.

To sum up, therefore, the Indian revolution is based upon the ideals of democracy, socialism, secularism and national unity; these are the four pillars upon which it rests. Not only is this revolution valid because it has an ideological base in the freedom movement, it has also in the last 25 years shown that it does represent a major thrust towards development and transformation. Certainly, its system is under pressure, but which system in the world is not under pressure? This is



because of the *zeitgeist*, the spirit of the times in which we are living. The second half of the twentieth century is an era of change. Science and technology are changing the face of this world before our very eyes. Old values, old formulations, old modes of thinking are collapsing and a new order is struggling to be born, and all the nations of the world find themselves precariously poised between the past and the future.

Every single political system is under pressure, including our own. The question is whether any system can meet the challenges of political unity, economic growth, social emancipation, and cultural resurgence. These are the problems that every system faces today, and I submit that the Indian revolution is dealing with these problems in an important and valid way. But what is required for its success is, above all, a sense of commitment to national goals, discipline and hard work, and a sense of excitement in participating in what Jawaharlal Nehru called the great adventure of building a new India. If we have this sense of commitment and excitement, if we have faith in our values and in ourselves and in the destiny of our nation, I am convinced that this Indian revolution will move to a great consummation by the end of this century, and will achieve a major breakthrough for one-seventh of the human race.

## A Programme for Our Youth

I define the post-independence generation as one which attained maturity after the country had achieved freedom in 1947. As the minimum voting age in our constitution is 21, the post-independence generation today would cover the age group between 26 and 47.

It is not often realized that this generation tends to have a markedly different approach to political problems compared with those who were actually involved in the freedom struggle. For persons like me the mighty movement for national independence is a glorious and stirring chapter in our history, but nevertheless something belonging distinctly to the past.

Even Gandhi is gradually becoming a semi-mythical figure, because we were never directly exposed to his remarkable personality.

The absence of participation in the freedom struggle certainly deprived us of an uplifting and ennobling experience. But in compensation it perhaps gives us a

somewhat fresher and more modern approach to national problems.

In the general elections of 1967 the post-independence generation provided a significant segment of voters, and in each succeeding election their proportion will rapidly increase. As an observer of the political scene and a participant in public life for almost two decades from the age of 18, it is clear to me that one of the greatest weaknesses of today lies in our inability to involve the younger generation in the exciting task of nation-building and tap the vast reservoir of energy and idealism it possesses.

Our country is inhabited by one-seventh of the human race. For India we can postulate no ideal short of a great power status; and I use this term not in any chauvinistic spirit but in the sense of a nation endowed with the economic strength and political cohesion that will enable it to take its place among the great powers of the world.

There are many components of this greatness, but one essential and inescapable factor will be the capacity to enthuse and mobilize our youth. Today there is widespread cynicism and frustration among the young, and our youth movement seems to have failed to instil idealism among them. This is a danger signal, because any party—however distinguished its past—is doomed to extinction if it loses touch with the thinking and aspirations of the nation's youth.

We live in a rapidly moving age of science and technology, and the speed of change has so increased that the differences of outlook and thinking between generations have become much wider than before. As our responses are to a considerable extent conditioned by the techno-



logical environment in which we live, it is inevitable that this divergence of outlook between the generations will tend progressively to increase. The impact of science and technology on a traditional society sets up tensions which are vividly reflected in the alienation between the generations. In these circumstances, any national party in power can neglect this aspect of national life only at the risk of grave peril.

The human personality is perhaps the most complex and sensitive mechanism that has ever existed, and its requirements have to be tackled on a multi-dimensional basis. In my view, the youth programme must revolve around urban and rural youth centres, based upon an integrated vision which takes the following aspects into consideration.

*Physical Development.* Building the new India of our dreams is no task for the weak in body. Jawaharlal Nehru once said that he belonged to a generation condemned for life to hard labour. This is equally true when we are seeking to build a new society and a new nation. Physical fitness is an essential aspect of youth welfare, and our youth centres must provide adequate facilities for sports and physical training. This need not involve any expensive and sophisticated equipment, and there is no reason why we cannot develop and propagate widely a system of physical education drawing both upon foreign as well as indigenous experience.

*Intellectual Development.* In this technological age we can no longer afford to remain mediocre, and our youth must be helped to equip themselves intellectually to the fullest so that they can contribute more effectively to the nation-building process. Although this will primarily be the responsibility of our educa-

tional institutions, youth centres must also provide literature and lectures which will strengthen the intellectual equipment of our younger generation, make them more aware of their responsibilities as free citizens of an open society and instil in them a genuine regard for the value of intellectual endeavour. Added to this could be programmes of music, dance, and drama which would add a much needed aesthetic dimension to our new society.

*Moral Development.* By morality I refer not so much to the traditional and somewhat puritanical connotation of the term, but rather to that wider and deeper morality which revolves around a fundamental commitment to certain ideals. There is a great deal of talk about national integration and unity, but these will remain mere slogans unless they are forged in the minds and hearts of our younger generation. It is only if our youth is imbued with a deep love for the nation that they will be able to resist the pervasive forces of corruption and opportunism in the country and emerge as highly motivated citizens. Our youth centres must, therefore, act as vital and pulsating centres for spreading a renewed sense of patriotism among the younger generation based upon the ideals of national unity, secularism, democratic socialism, and human brotherhood.

*Spiritual Development.* It has become fashionable to decry any talk of religion in the context of political activity. There is no doubt that wrongly understood and mistakenly applied religion has caused immense misery and suffering to the subcontinent. And yet the keystone of religion—which to my mind lies in the reaffirmation of the divinity inherent in man and the validity of the individual spiritual quest—forms a vital



factor in future human development which we can neglect only at the cost of losing touch with the very essence of human personality. One of the main reasons for the alienation of our youth today is this lack of any spiritual ideal. Unless this can be re-established in a manner which cuts through the miasma of superstition and fanaticism that has disgraced the name of religion over the centuries, our nation will never become truly great.

Indeed, mankind must gradually move towards the ideal of human unity if it is to survive at all in this nuclear age. This can only be done with the acceptance of the divinity of the individual regardless of caste or colour, race or creed, religion or nationality. This spiritual humanism—a fundamental factor in our own cultural heritage—must spread among our younger generation if they are to become not merely good citizens of the world's greatest democracy but true world citizens as well.



## 12

### Past, Present, and Future

I find that those of us who belong to the post-independence generation, as I do, tend to take our freedom very much for granted. Many young people today are not aware of the sacrifices and struggles that went into the attainment of this freedom. Nothing in the world is obtained unless the price is paid, and our freedom was obtained by paying a very heavy price in service and sacrifice through long years and decades by millions of people. I think it is important that the modern generation should be fully aware of this, because then freedom will be something which will be treasured more deeply.

The fact that we live in a free, democratic society as free citizens of a free country is still a very rare privilege in this world, because I think the majority of the human race does not have the freedom we have in India.

Here in this school\* it is a unique occasion—a hundred and twenty-five years since the school was founded, a long period covering perhaps the most important years of Indian history. I think it is unique that an institution like this should have survived for so long and should have served generation after generation of people living in this country, and today should be celebrating its 125th anniversary.

I consider it a very strange and happy coincidence that my own ancestor was associated with the founding of this school, and through the years and the decades I now find myself here in the fifth generation as a parent of this very school. I think it is, in a way, a very moving link between the past and the present. I have attended six founder's days here. But this one, of course, is unique. I am privileged and proud that I have been invited on the occasion and I would like to convey my very warmest greetings and congratulations to the staff and the students who are here today and those who are not here, who are in different parts of the country and different parts of the world.

I hope our friends who have come here from the United Kingdom will carry back with them my personal greetings to the old Sanawarians who live in the United Kingdom, because in a way Sanawar not only links the centuries, it also links nations. The old relationship between Britain and India, one of domination, has changed now to a relationship between equals. I think it is an excellent thing that a school like this is able to act as a binding force across the continents, across the oceans, because the deep link of a school is

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\*Sanawar School, Simla (125th Founder's Day, 4 October 1972).

something that cuts across all barriers of race, creed, and religion and even of nationality, and knits people together regardless of where they may be in the world.

As the students of any institution are its lifeblood, I will address my remarks more to the students than to the parents or the teachers. And to the students I would like to say this: please always remember that living as we are in a vast ocean of poverty and deprivation, those of you who have the advantage of excellent education in such beautiful surroundings are a privileged few. Therefore, you must be fully aware of the responsibility that you owe to the broader community in which you live, and of the fact that this rare opportunity you have been given should be utilized to its fullest.

There are four special aspects which I think need to be stressed in your education.

The first, of course, is the body. We want young people with muscles of iron and nerves of steel if a new India is to be built. Building a new country is not a work for people who are weak. I must say that I have been deeply impressed by the tattoo and the parade which shows the students' extraordinary physical skills and stamina. I think it is a very good augury for the future that our young men and women should pay such a lot of attention to physical perfection, because that to my mind is a very first prerequisite of a good education.

The second aspect is development of the mind. We live in an age of science and technology when new knowledge is pouring into the world at a fantastic rate. During the process of education your minds must be sharpened so that you can take advantage of this new knowledge and can help to yoke the power of science



and technology to the chariot of India's progress. Intellectually it is tremendously important that you must develop these faculties, and alongwith intellectual development you must also develop the aesthetic sensibility, the awareness of beauty, the creation of beauty, through art, music, and literature. Here again I have for the last many years been seeing your exhibitions and the work that is done in this school, and I am very happy that this aspect of the human personality is being particularly looked after in this school—the all-round development of the human faculties of mind, intellect and aesthetic sensibility.

Then there is the spiritual dimension. It is very difficult to talk about that, but it is, nevertheless, perhaps the most important single dimension which differentiates the human being from many other species that live on this planet. The inner integration, the dedication to goals and ideals that transcend the human condition and that take us from time into the timeless. This, of course, is a sphere in which there can be no parade and no exhibition; it is something that will develop within you because in the ultimate analysis the spiritual dimension is an inner one. I feel hopeful that, living as you do in these beautiful surroundings near nature and imbibing the beauty of the mountains around you, this aspect also will be developed in the students of this institution.

And, finally, one has got to knit these various aspects into the framework of discipline and team spirit. This has been one of our national weaknesses through the centuries. We have never in this country lacked individual genius. We have produced individually some of the greatest scientists, artists, philosophers, and warriors.

What we have lacked from time to time in our history is the capacity to knit ourselves together into a disciplined team and thereby to bring to its full power the various individual resources and faculties that we possess. One of the big advantages of public school education is the team spirit it inculcates in the students. It develops the capacity to subordinate their individual preferences to broader goals which is a very important part of education, because when you leave this school and go out into the wider world you will invariably find that what you want to do is not always what actually happens. You have got to subordinate your capacities without in any way stultifying your inner freedom and your inner independence, and you have got to knit yourselves into a broader team if this country is to become great.

And great this country will become indeed, if it is not today, because this is the destiny of India. For thousands of years, since the very dawn of human civilization, India has survived vicissitudes which would have destroyed any lesser people or country. But it has survived, and today it is the new India that you and I, and all of us, have to build. Indeed, not only a new India but a new world, because old formulations, old modes of expression are dying, disappearing, crumbling, and there is a tremendous quest for the new.

What sort of future are we going to build? This is a question I would like to pose today. It is a future in which the students of this school, I am sure, will have an important role to play. The future we are trying to build is an exciting one. The problems before us are immense—poverty, ignorance, illiteracy, disease, backwardness, superstition, narrow-think-



ing—these problems have to be overcome. But they can only be overcome by integrated personalities whose bodies and minds and spirits are all attuned to the new requirements. And I would venture to hope that students of this school, when they leave the portals of Sanawar, will carry with them that integration which is so important in the building of the new India of our dreams.

There will be difficulties, but your motto "Never Give In" provides a very valuable guidance for one's future life. There is a similar view which has come down the centuries to us. In the *Kathopanishad* there is a beautiful *shloka*, the meaning of which is exactly this: that we must arise, we must awake, we must move forward boldly on the path.

Difficulties will be there, but no individual has ever become great unless he has overcome difficulty, and no nation has ever become great unless it has overcome dangers and difficulties and has thereby strengthened its own inner fibre. Therefore, difficulties should not deter us.

I call upon you, the students, who are the hope of the future, to gird yourselves, to integrate your personalities, and to be ready when you leave this school to make your contribution towards building the new world that is around us. There is so much that needs to be done, so much suffering and misery in this world today. There are still today, as I speak here, millions of people in this country who do not even get one square meal a day, far less two; there are millions of children in India who do not get enough to eat, who never have an opportunity of going to school; there are millions who have no shelter over their heads. This is something



which must be remedied. We will remedy it; we are determined to remedy it. But in order to remedy it we need young men and women who are integrated, who are aglow with power and force and whose total capacities and capabilities are attuned towards building the new India and the new world around us.

Therefore, my friends I will end this with this great *mantra* of the *Kathopanishad*, which is in line with your own motto, teaching us that we must push forward. Man is an eternal pilgrim, for man there can be no waiting, there can be no tarrying on the path. Man has got a goal, and until that goal is reached one has got to move onwards despite all difficulties,

*Uttishthata jagrata prapya varan nibodhata,  
Kshurasya dhara nishita durataya;  
Durgam pathas tat kavayo vadanti.*

## Youth and the Modern Age

Today is the most exciting time in the long and varied history of the human race to be young. After many million years of tortuous history upon this planet mankind has entered a new and crucial phase of its destiny. Science and technology have given us the power to do wonders, to work miracles. We have begun to break away from the confines of this globe and to stretch literally into the heavens in search of new knowledge. The new power of science and technology, if intelligently used with wisdom and understanding, can bring about a virtual revolution in the world. It can eliminate poverty, want, misery, and ignorance from the face of this earth. On the other hand, if misused, the same science and technology can bring about the annihilation not only of the human race but indeed of all life upon this planet.

I feel, therefore that by the end of this century, by the year 2000 which is only twenty-six years away, the

crucial decision will have been made one way or other ; whether or not the human race is fit to be able to survive its own power, whether or not the very increase in its intellectual capacity will lead to its ultimate destruction. This has happened on earlier occasions also. It is not the first time that a species will have vanished from this earth and, therefore, mankind today is on trial. And it seems to me that it is the younger generation who will particularly have to take up this challenge.

Old traditions, old modes of thought, old formulations and philosophies are dying and there is a tremendous quest for the new. At this juncture those at present studying in schools and universities must realize the responsibility that is upon them. In our country particularly, we have now entered a new phase of our history. Many generations struggled and fought for our freedom. But it is now the responsibility of the younger generation to maintain this freedom and to strengthen it.

Our freedom is by no means complete merely because we are politically free. Political freedom without social emancipation and economic progress has little meaning. It is important I agree, it is the essential prerequisite for further development. But by itself political freedom is not enough. It has got to be accompanied by two things. The social structure we have inherited through centuries of foreign rule has become rigid and solidified, incapable of meeting the needs and requirements of changing times. We have, therefore, to bring about a social transformation, to bring about a new society in India so that our people would have the best of the qualities previously prescribed for the castes. As you know, in our traditional system, the



Brahmins were supposed to be the learned and knowledgeable in the studies of philosophy and wisdom; the Kshatriyas were to be the sword-arm of the nation to defend it against aggression and to preserve its freedom; the Vaishyas were supposed to increase the wealth of the nation by intelligent commerce and trade and industry; and the Shudras by their service and labour were supposed to bring about the basic substratum of work that was required. Today, these old castes and divisions have become meaningless and absurd. What we require today is a new caste of Indians who combine the wisdom of the Brahmins, the valour of the Kshatriyas, the commercial acumen of the Vaishyas, and the service and labour of the Shudras—these four traditional qualities combined into a new caste of Indians cutting across all these and other denominations of religion, caste, creed, and so on. This is what we have to aim at if we have really to preserve, protect, and strengthen our political freedom. The social emancipation to some extent has come but it is still incomplete, particularly in rural areas where absurdities such as untouchability are still practised. Therefore, we must be very clear in our minds that until we rid ourselves of the last vestiges of these backward looking approaches to life, we will not be able to build the new India of our dreams.

That is the sphere of social emancipation. Then there is the sphere of economic development. Even today millions of Indians live below the level that is necessary for a decent and civilized human existence. When a person is not sure where his next meal is coming from, when he does not have even clothes to wear and means to feed and educate his children, or have a roof over his head, we cannot say that our freedom is

complete. It still has a very long way to go before it can finally be said to be complete. And, therefore, the point I would like to stress to the younger generation is that we are politically free but these other two prerequisites of true freedom are still lacking and for these you have to work and labour.

I know that our youth has a tremendous fund of idealism and devotion and dedication to build a new nation. But I would submit to you that merely the desire to build a new India, the desire to serve India, is not sufficient; you will have to painstakingly develop the capacity to serve India effectively. In our cultural heritage there is a very excellent correlation between *sadhana* and *siddhi*. Anything can be achieved; you can fly in the air and you can work miracles; but nothing can be achieved without *sadhana*, without effort and without the concentrated long labour that is required to bring about the *siddhi*. Similarly, if your *siddhi* is the capacity to build a new India, to become true servants and sons of this great nation, you will have to go through an arduous *sadhana*.

And what are the four phases of this *sadhana*? First, there is physical strength. Building new India is not the work of people who are weak. We have got to be physically strong; we have got to have the capacity to merge our sweat and if necessary our blood, with the soil of the country so that it can prosper and flourish and, therefore, physical fitness is very important. Whether it is in games or sports, NCC or *akhada*, whatever the mode, we must develop strong young people who are physically strong and who are not afraid or ashamed to go into the field and to work. The strange concept that has developed in this country, that a boy who has



received his graduation or his MA is no longer fit to work on the soil, is ridiculous. The programme of "earn and learn" in which students do the work themselves and earn their way through college is a step in the right direction. This is nothing new; in western countries it is done all the time. You take a job at night as a dishwasher or a waiter in a restaurant and in the day you go to college and work your way through college. This is a concept which must be developed here. Therefore, the first aspect of your *sadhana* is to keep your body fit and strong and supple and energetic.

The second is to develop your intellectual capacity. We live in an age of science and technology, and it will not be possible for us to understand the new knowledge, to grasp these new disciplines if our minds are not sharpened for the task. We can, therefore, no longer afford the luxury of mediocrity: the luxury of merely passing and getting a degree somehow or the other, so that it can get you a job. That is not good enough. If India is to grow great, if India is to flourish and prosper, we have to yoke the power of science and technology to the chariot of India's progress. It is only then that India will really be able to move forward rapidly on the path of development. And, therefore, while you are in college you must develop your intellectual capacities to the maximum. You must be interested in everything; be interested in politics certainly, because political activity is at the very root of the development of this country. But that does not mean that you should get involved in party-politics and thereby waste your time which should be spent upon your intellectual studies. After all your whole lives are before you. If you wish to become members of Parliament or legis-



latures, you can do so with great pleasure after you finish your college. But when you are at a university, you must use the time at your disposal to quicken your intellect, to sharpen your mind to grapple with the new problems and new knowledge that is before us. And remember that you in the university are a privileged few, a select elite in the country. Millions of boys do not even have the opportunity yet to go to primary school, far less to university. And, therefore, you must use this privilege in a manner so that you can repay the debt that you owe to society.

I have spoken of physical fitness, and of intellectual development; the third aspect of our *sadhana* is discipline and teamwork. In our country we had never lacked in individual genius. Individually, we have produced the greatest scientists in the world, the greatest astronomers, the greatest authors and dramatists, and so on. But what we do lack is the capacity to work together as a team so that our process of development can be speeded up. This is something we lack as a nation, I feel. We tend to be too individualistic and thereby not to be able to work as a part of a disciplined, coherent team for the attainment of certain clearcut, comprehensive goals. And, therefore, you must develop this capacity now in the university, when you do your project or play your games or whatever other activity you undertake including research projects. Remember, the greatest of men in the world cannot achieve anything individually. When Rama had to go to Lanka, he could not go there alone although he was the greatest of men and was looked upon as the Lord incarnate. He had to take the help of a team of people in order to build a bridge to go to Lanka. Therefore, howsoever brilliant

and outstanding a person may be, unless the whole nation works as a disciplined team, it will not be possible to make substantial progress. And I would submit to you that this aspect of discipline and teamwork is the third phase of the *sadhana* that you have to undertake.

The fourth, and perhaps the most important phase, is deep love for the country—for India. I know that all of us are patriotic, we join easily enough in singing the national anthem and saluting the national flag. But I do not merely mean surface patriotism. I mean a deeper commitment to India—its ideas, goals, and its aspirations. A commitment to India, as Aurobindo used to see it, not merely as a mass of mountains, rivers, and forests, but as a living entity that has nurtured our race for over five thousand years and that has made it possible today for fully one-seventh of the human race to move into the sunlight of democracy and progress. To this India you must be dedicated with all your mind, with all your heart and with all your will. It is not merely enough to sing the national anthem, because whenever some small problems arise, whether it is linguistic or inter-state or any other, suddenly our patriotism disappears and we begin getting involved in smaller loyalties. I do not say there should not be smaller loyalties. There should be. Everybody is loyal, for example to his language, to family, to associates, and so on. But the point is that the loyalty to the nation must override these lesser loyalties, so that when the necessity comes the whole of this nation can stand up together and united and show the world that the India of today is no longer the old, divisive India broken into bits and pieces by intrigue, but is a new



dynamic, integrated India which will one day achieve its due position in the comity of the world.

I, therefore, wanted to place before you the necessity of undergoing the *sadhana* of physical fitness, of intellectual acumen, of teamwork and discipline and, of developing a deep love for the nation. If you do this, I am sure you will prove worthy citizens of a great country. Today we are free and we are entering a new and exciting phase in our history. There is a new challenge, a new movement among the people; new socio-economic goals have been opened out, new hopes and aspirations have been aroused. It is for you who are today in universities to fulfil these hopes and aspirations. It will not merely be enough for political leaders in Delhi to make decisions unless each one of you is imbued with the spirit of dedication and determination to build the India of our dreams.

It is this message I wanted to give you and I will end with a quotation from the *Kathopanishad* which exhorts us to arise and awake and to overcome the obstacles in our path. Obstacles have always been there. Were there no obstacles when Chatrapati Shivaji was fighting? Were there no obstacles when the British were ruling, when to say *Bande Mataram* (वंदे मातरम्) meant certain death and young men mounted gallows with वंदे मातरम् on their lips? What about the difficulties at that time? Today our difficulties are there; but they are nothing compared with what we have been through in the last many centuries. Therefore, difficulties are not meant to break our spirit or will. I come from a mountainous area myself. The higher the mountain, the deeper and the stronger must be our aspiration to gain the summit.



## Enlightened Patriotism

The post-independence generation to which I belong came to maturity after we had become free. For those like me foreign rule is at most a dim, childhood memory. I address my remarks not so much to teachers and parents but rather to students who form the lifestream of educational centres which are a crucible in which the minds and hearts of our youth will be forged in the decades to come.

It has been said that the youth of India today lacks the fervent patriotism and dedication displayed by earlier generations who struggled and sacrificed for our freedom and that our generation has no clear vision of the future and tend to fritter away psychic and intellectual energies in noncreative pursuits. Perhaps this criticism is justified to some extent. Yet as one belonging to the post-independence generation I am unable to accept that we are in any way inherently inferior to our elders. It is true that the youth today

not only in India but throughout the world is restive. The basic reason for this seems to be that within a single generation vast changes take place in our society and our way of life. This in turn gives rise to new modes of thinking among the younger generations which are sometimes quite incomprehensible to the elder, so that there emerges an acute problem of lack of communication between the generations. The elders tend to look upon students as hopelessly indisciplined and unruly, while the younger generations are inclined to consider their elders at best as rather foolish old people, and at worst as positively reactionary and retrogressive.

To some extent we in India are insulated from the whirlwind of change that in this nuclear age is transforming large parts of the world. Yet even immemorial India is beginning to change and, indeed, must change if we are to break the poverty barrier and take our place among the great nations of the world. Change we must, but in what manner? Change can be both creative and destructive, and the texture of change will depend to a large extent on the youth of the nation. It is in this broad context that I would like to share with you some thoughts regarding the responsibility of the younger generation. I do so in all humility, acutely aware of the fact that we are all heirs to a remarkable tradition not only of scholarship and learning but of patriotic endeavour and high national achievement, and if we are to justify our inheritance and further enrich it we will have to strain every effort of body, mind and spirit of which we are capable.

It has become clear over the last 26 years that unless we are able to recapture some of the flaming idealism of our freedom movement, and are prepared to labour



and sacrifice to the same extent as our forbears did then, we will never really be able to solve the tremendous problems this nation faces or succeed in building the new India of our dreams. Before we are able effectively to build India, however, we must accept the fact that we shall have to develop the capacity to do so. Merely a vague patriotism and a general desire to serve the motherland is not sufficient. Too often do we glibly talk of building the new India, without realizing that such talk is meaningless if it is not accompanied by strenuous self-preparation. It has been said that genius is ten per cent inspiration and ninety per cent perspiration. The same can well be said for nation-building.

Among the many valuable concepts in our past heritage is the relationship between *siddhi* (achievement) and *sadhana* (effort). There is nothing that is beyond the capacity of a human being to achieve. Yet nothing can be achieved unless the requisite effort and discipline goes into it. If, therefore, we wish to achieve a prosperous and strong India, each one of us shall have first to undergo a process of self-discipline, a *sadhana*. I hasten to add that this does not involve retreat to Himalayan *ashramas*. There is a curious misconception that our tradition is exclusively or even preponderantly a life-negating one. In fact the *Upanishads*, representing as they do the predominant strand in our cultural heritage, glow with a positive but discriminating life-affirmation. When I speak of a *sadhana*, therefore, I envisage it as a continuous process involving the entire student and young adult career.

As I see it, this process has four distinct aspects. The first is physical fitness and strength. Building a great nation is not a task for weaklings; it requires, as



Vivekananda put it, youth with "muscles of iron and nerves of steel" if a great future is to be built on the foundations of a mighty past. Our youth must therefore on no account neglect physical fitness. This is particularly important in the universities where, by and large, it would appear that physical fitness is not really given the importance it deserves. Our national standards in athletics and sports, for example, are markedly lower than international ones. Although Indians are one-seventh of the human race our modern achievements in the sphere of physical strength and skill are by no means impressive. This is almost certainly a reflection of the comparatively poor physical standards in our universities and, therefore, I feel that our youth must create a virtual cult of physical fitness as a prerequisite for further achievement.

The second aspect of our self-preparation is the acquisition of intellectual power and technical skills. We live in an age of science and technology which are transforming the world before our very eyes. Unless we harness this power India will never be able to make progress. If, during their academic years, students allow themselves to be sidetracked into non-productive activities instead of maximizing their intellectual capital formation, the loss in the ultimate analysis will not only be theirs but the nation's.

In a vast underdeveloped nation like ours university education is a valuable privilege. It is therefore a matter for deep concern that so many lakhs of student-hours every year are wasted in various forms of unrest. It is perhaps not sufficiently realized that university education is an extremely expensive undertaking as far as the community is concerned. As such, it is essential for

students to take full advantage of their years in college and university to equip themselves intellectually for the tasks of nation-building. I can assure you that there will be plenty of opportunities to savour the excitement of political activity after you leave the portals of the university. There is no particular advantage in telescoping the process at the risk of ruining an academic career.

The third aspect of self-preparation is the acquisition of discipline and the capacity for teamwork. We have never in this country lacked individual genius; what we do lack is the capacity to weave our individual talents into a firm framework of national achievement. During my recent visit to Japan I was deeply impressed by the manner in which that nation has reconstructed itself upon the ruins of the second world war. Today it is reaching new heights of prosperity and challenging the West at its own game of technological progress. Surely, we as individuals are no less talented than the Japanese. But I think we shall have to admit that our discipline and teamwork is far less effective than theirs. Our youth, therefore, has not merely to become individually strong in body and mind but must also learn to work harmoniously in a team and thereby contribute more effectively to national development. Whether it is science or technology, trade or commerce, agriculture or industry, politics or social service, the capacity to work as part of a harmonious team is the essence of abiding success; *saha virajam karavavahai*, as the Vedic invocation goes.

Finally, the fourth and crowning aspect of our *sadhana* must be the development of an intense but enlightened patriotism. It is true that each one of us



claims to be patriotic, and we join easily enough in singing the national anthem and hoisting the national flag. However, often when a conflict arises between national interest and a lesser loyalty—whether to province or linguistic group, caste or political party—our patriotism tends for all practical purposes to be relegated to the back seat. I am not one of those who denigrate the importance of language or region in our national life. But I do think that unless we are able to develop an overriding loyalty to the nation, such lesser loyalties pose a grave danger to national unity and progress.

In this context I would like to quote from Aurobindo, one of the masterminds of the present age, who was closely associated with the great radical nationalist movement at the turn of the century. Writing on the doctrine of passive resistance, he phrases his concept of patriotism in these immortal words which should ring constantly in the ears of our youth:

Love has a place in politics, but it is the love of one's country, for one's countrymen, for the glory, greatness and happiness of the race, the divine *ananda* of self-immolation for one's fellows, the ecstasy of relieving their sufferings, the joy of seeing one's blood flow for country and freedom, the bliss of union in death with the fathers of the race. The feeling of almost physical delight in the touch of the mother-soil, of the winds that blow from Indian seas, of the rivers that stream from Indian hills, in the hearing of Indian speech, music, poetry, in the familiar sights, sounds, habits, dress, manners of our Indian life, this is the physical root of that love. The



pride in our past, the pain of our present, the passion for the future are its trunk and branches. Self-sacrifice and self-forgetfulness, great service, high endurance for the country are its fruit.

It is important, however, that our patriotism, though intense, should not degenerate into narrow and self-righteous chauvinism. Indeed one of the keys of our past greatness has been the capacity to accept fresh ideas from every side, and to place India in its world perspective. All the great leaders of modern Indian thought have reiterated this point. Vivekananda and Aurobindo, Gandhi and Nehru were always acutely conscious of the fact that India had an obligation to the international community of which it was an important part. Our patriotism, therefore, should not be a stifling, stultifying force but rather a wide and generous emotion that will act as a catalyst in our national development and yet not cut us away from our growing relations with the outer world. For our ultimate aim must be to bring nearer the birth of a truly international community in which the power of science will be used not on the creation of increasingly destructive weapons of mass annihilation but for the eradication of poverty and want from the face of our planet in which all nations—great and small—can live in harmonious cooperation, each following unhindered its chosen path of development yet each contributing in some measure to the general welfare.

In a world still torn by hatred and suspicion this may appear an over-idealistic goal. However, if our fundamental faith in the potential divinity of man is to have any meaning, we must continue to hope and work

for such a consummation. But before we can really play our destined role in building a new world community we must first build a new India which is economically prosperous, socially emancipated, politically integrated and spiritually dynamic. And I submit that such an India can only be built by a younger generation equipped with physical stamina and intellectual competence, a capacity for disciplined teamwork and a glowing yet enlightened patriotism. It is my sincere hope that our universities will live up to their destiny by producing a steady stream of young men and women thus equipped.

# 15

## Service above Self

The achievement within fourteen days in 1971 of the liberation of Bangladesh, the surrender of the Pakistan army there, the capturing of almost one lakh prisoners of war, and the major gains we made in the western sector were quite remarkable. This campaign has indeed been unique in military history. Our great armed forces, particularly those who laid down their lives and those who were permanently injured or crippled for the extraordinary achievement, deserve the gratitude of the entire nation.

But even more significant, in the longer run, has been the fact that this was a victory of ideals. The war was not fought for territorial aggrandisement, nor for any type of enrichment. We fought because the ideals which we and the people of Bangladesh held sacred—secularism, democracy, and freedom—were being trampled upon by a ruthless fascist dictatorship. It was a clearcut ideological confrontation between the forces



dedicated to welfare, progress, peace, brotherhood and harmony and those that were dedicated to the suppression of all human rights, liberties and to the complete annihilation and genocide of vast sections of the population. The victory, therefore, was a victory for every freedom-loving person in the entire world.

Under the inspiring leadership of Indira Gandhi the whole nation rose as one man (or one woman, shall I say). Everybody participated in the victory. We sank our political differences and our petty quarrels, and proved once again that when the time comes India stands united as a rock and is prepared always to shed its blood to uphold those principles upon which this nation is founded.

We must always remember, however, that the achievement also brought new responsibilities, because nothing in this life can be had without having to pay the price for it. If we emerged from the war stronger, more mature and higher in the esteem of the world, we should also remember that we need additional humility and a new dedication to fighting to a successful finish the other war against poverty and disease, ignorance and illiteracy, superstition, bigotry and fanaticism. This is a much more difficult war to win. We won the military war in fourteen days, but this war will take much longer. Yet, enriched and strengthened with our victory, we must turn ourselves with devotion and dedication toward fighting with a keener spirit this other war against poverty that is always with us.

I have always been impressed by the ideal of "Service Above Self" to which many of our people say they are dedicated. What is this "self" of which we speak? It can be looked upon in two ways. There is, of course,

the great "Self" with a capital "S"—the Self that comprehends within its ambit everything that exists in the cosmos. Obviously that is not the Self that can be transcended, because that in itself is the totality of existence. Then there is the other "self" within each one of us, the self that is often based on fear, narrow considerations, and limited outlook that is cabined and confined by countless inhibitions. This is the false ego which has to be transcended if man is to achieve his true destiny. And it seems to me that when we talk of "service above self" it really means that this smaller "self," this narrower egoism within each individual, has to be transcended in the broader sphere of "service."

Now service can be an excellent means for this transcending. For thousands of years, this has been known that selfless devoted service to the larger cause can bring us out of ourselves and break the shackles and confines of our limited self and enable the human personality to flower to its full glory. The ancient ideal of welfare of all—*bahu jana sukhaya bahu jana hitaya*—is an ideal that has inspired some of the greatest human beings, and it is important that this ideal of service should become more and more widespread throughout the world and particularly in India, which is an ocean of suffering. There are still today, millions of people who are not even sure of a single full meal a day; millions who go without adequate clothing and shelter, freezing and shivering in rain; millions who do not have an adequate place to live in and whose existence can only be termed subhuman; of children who do not get the opportunity to go to even primary school. And then there is so much suffering of the deaf, the dumb, the lame, and the retarded. All around us there is suffering and



pain, and if each one of us in our small way can do something to alleviate this human misery we would have done something extremely valuable.

There is a great need that this ideal of "service above self" should be followed on a longer scale by the privileged sections of society, particularly those involved in trade, commerce and business. There is always a tendency in a better off person to get so involved in his own business and profit that he forgets his broader social responsibility. You forget that your own business and work can flourish only in an atmosphere in which there is general wellbeing, and that in a modern world the few cannot wallow in wealth and luxury at the expense of millions. The profit motive must be combined with the motive of service, if it is really to become a harmonious ideal, because profit by itself may or may not be good but profit along with service to the community really puts the whole concept in a much better perspective.

Therefore so many spheres of activity are awaiting dedicated workers, men and women with compassion in their minds and hearts in order to alleviate human suffering. No doubt there are many organizations in the country which are increasingly taking up projects for the benefit of the people. But it is not enough and I hope that more and more of this will percolate down into our entire system so that the ideal of "service above self" really becomes increasingly relevant and meaningful in our present situation.

There is also a great need to transcend national barriers to link people of different countries, religions, social, economic, and political systems. Nationalism is very important, in fact, crucially important, as has been



proved in this century. Yet in some way, to some extent, nationalism will have to be transcended if the human race is to survive. Life has existed on this planet for millions of years. The human race itself stretches back to only about five to ten thousand years of recorded civilization. But today humanity has at long last come to a critical point in its long and tortuous evolution upon this planet. Today science and technology has endowed us with tremendous power which, if used wisely, can bring about unprecedented progress. It can annihilate ignorance and poverty and disease. It can ensure for every man, woman, and child a decent standard of living and opportunities for the development of their personality. It can ensure peace, progress, and welfare for all the many billions of people who inhabit the earth. Yet this very power, if misused, can bring about such colossal destruction as can hardly be imagined.

Nuclear weapons continue to be stockpiled and this time if the human race goes it will leave behind a completely uninhabitable planet. Many races have vanished from the face of the earth. The dinosaurs ruled the earth for a million years, but when they went, they did so comparatively quietly and at least allowed the evolutionary system to continue. But if the human race succeeds in blowing itself up it will leave behind a world upon which nothing whatsoever can ever live or develop! Therefore this tremendous dilemma today. We have humanity poised for a new leap forward and yet we have the threat of destruction constantly hanging over us. Human knowledge has grown beyond imagination in the last 50 years. But has there been a corresponding growth in human wisdom and understanding? This is really the question we have all got to ask ourselves.

We live in an age of change in which our established values are dissolving before our very eyes. The future of our race, in this last third of the twentieth century, will depend on how we, who are privileged to witness this tremendous change, conduct ourselves. We must realize that we are a link in a world chain. When we do so we will appreciate the real and deeper significance of these ideals. And I hope that each one of us will, in our own way, contribute towards making the correct choice for mankind.

## Privy Purses and Privileges

The world is in a paroxysm of change. Indeed, established values and outmoded rigidities are beginning to collapse. Science and technology are transforming the face of this world before our very eyes, and today we are in a position in which the old is dying, the new is struggling to be born, and our generation is dramatically poised between the past and the future. The only thing that is certain today in this world is that there will be change. The choice is not between *status quo* and change; it is between change with order and direction and change with disorder and chaos. That is the challenge we face today.

The midterm elections, the great general election, has galvanised the nation and has given a massive mandate for a fundamental transformation of society through democratic socialism, a mandate which this government and parliament, which the prime minister rightly described as the fountainhead of change, are



beginning in right earnest to fulfil. In December 1971, the people of India speaking through their great parliament gave their verdict upon the future of privy purses and privileges. And I would like to appeal to the princes in parliament and outside that once the verdict has been given by the people of India, the princes with their rich and patriotic background should accept this verdict with grace. The verdict will have to be accepted but I say that they should accept it with grace, because the princes are intelligent and enlightened people.

Particularly those who have been elected to the parliament and who know what it is to go to the people, at least they should accept it with good grace, because feudalism is not something which was unique to this country. Feudalism is a phase through which every nation in the world has passed but, I think, it was unique that for over two decades the princes continued, with the consent of the people, to enjoy privileges and privy purses. This, I think, is unique in the history of the world. Today when the people of India have given their verdict it should be accepted. I would have hoped that these 20 years, for anybody with wisdom and foresight, should have been enough to realize the way things were going, to read the writing on the wall and to adjust themselves to the new circumstances.

I come from a princely family myself which has a rich heritage of which I am proud. But while drawing sustenance from that heritage I do not want it to weigh heavily round my neck, albatross-like, or round the neck of my children. The other day an elderly person from my area came to me and said, "Why are you harming the interests of your small children with your politi-

cal views?" I told him he was mistaken; my children would grow up as free citizens of a free India and this was the biggest privilege I could give them; and if in the process of growing up I could instil in them a commitment to their great spiritual ideals that have nurtured this country from the very dawn of civilization, I would have bequeathed to them something which is more valuable than all the privy purses in India put together.

We have got to move into a new mode of looking at things. We have got to break away from outmoded status symbols and move into a position where a man is judged not by what he has but by what he is, not by how many titles he has inherited but by his intrinsic worth and merit, not by the privileges he enjoys but by the service he renders to society. It is only if there is this fundamental transformation in our attitude towards these matters that the new India we are all seeking to create will be born, and the new race that will inherit the future of this world will be born.

Mankind today is at a crucial crossroads of its destiny, and it is incumbent upon those of us who have a role to play in public life to give a lead to the people, to break away from things which may have had validity and value at one time but which today have lost their validity, to move into a new appreciation of the value of the human personality for itself, for the intrinsic merit and worth that there is in each individual human being. I feel that the abolition of privy purses is a small but a significant step in the direction of the creation of this new society.

## The Victory—A Many-splendoured Achievement

It would be a useful exercise at this point to look back and analyze the various dimensions of the victory we achieved against Pakistan during the fourteen-day war in 1971 under the truly magnificent leadership of Indira Gandhi.

It was a victory for our armed forces whose superb courage, perfect coordination and immaculate professionalism achieved in a mere fourteen days total victory in the east and a crushing defeat of the Pakistani aggression in the west. The war not only highlighted once again the excellent fighting qualities of the Indian servicemen, but vindicated the correctness of the training, equipment, and planning that was undertaken since the last war with Pakistan in 1965. The Border Security Force and other paramilitary organizations also performed with distinction. Our brave soldiers, sailors and airmen laid down their lives and suffered grievous injuries by the thousands for the defence of



our national integrity and the vindication of our national policy, thus earning the undying gratitude of the nation.

It was equally a triumph for the Mukti Bahini, a force which beginning literally from scratch and facing overwhelming odds was able by sheer courage and determination to build itself in less than a year into a powerful guerilla-cum-military organization which played an invaluable role in the liberation of Bangladesh in coordination with our armed forces. The fact that young boys hardly in their teens were in the forefront of the Mukti Bahini showed the irresistible will and determination of the people of Bangladesh to lead an independent existence with honour and dignity.

It was a victory for the people of India who rose as one man to defend the country against one of the most brutal and ruthless military regimes the world has known. Differences of religion, caste, creed, language, region, party affiliation, all faded into the background, and it was dramatically proved that in the hour of crisis India stands powerfully united in its determination to fight for the ideals to which this nation is dedicated. In the course of the short war every section of Indians in its own way contributed towards the triumph, and thus immeasurably strengthened the texture of national unity. Shared dangers and shared triumphs weld together disparate elements into a powerful nation, and India emerged from the ordeal with its national integrity further strengthened and enriched by the blood of its martyrs and the spirit of unity among its people.

It was equally a triumph for the people of Bangladesh who, in the last quarter century, probably suffered more than any comparable section of people in the history

of the world. There was no brutality to which they were not subjected, no cruelty which they did not undergo, no indignity that was not thrust upon them, especially after the vicious Pakistani crackdown on 25 March 1971. They lost a million men, women and children tortured and butchered in cold blood, and ten million fled in terror and panic to seek shelter in India. Yet never for a moment did the brave people of Bangladesh falter in their determination to emerge into the sunlight of freedom and never for a moment was the aggressor able to break their unflinching spirit. And ultimately they emerged as proud citizens of a free nation dedicated to the same ideals and principles upon which India is based.

Above all, the victory was one of ideals, of the glowing principles of freedom, democracy, socialism and secularism as against the fascist military dictatorship and ruthless economic exploitation of the Pakistani regime. The pernicious two-nation theory, conceived in hate, born in bloodshed, and nurtured for a quarter century in bigotry, finally collapsed. The victory was thus something more than that of the 635 million people of India and Bangladesh; it was a victory for those everywhere in the world who are devoted to the ideals that have triumphed; a victory for all men of peace and goodwill dedicated to the concepts of human freedom and the dignity of the individual.

We have always stated clearly, and reiterate today, that despite all that happened we bear no animosity against the people of West Pakistan. We know that their basic problems, like ours, are the problems of poverty and illiteracy, malnutrition and unemployment, and that the real challenges before them are also



the same as those which we face—social emancipation and economic transformation. It is indeed a tragedy that for a quarter of a century the people of Pakistan have consistently been misled by their rulers, who have adopted an unreasoning and irrational policy of hatred against India and indulged in a deliberate attempt to fan the flames of communal bigotry instead of tackling the urgent socio-economic tasks faced by their people.

As a nation we are bad haters, and our whole approach to international relations is based on a genuine desire for peace and friendship. If some interpreted this as a sign of flabbiness or weakness, the war with Pakistan will have helped correct any such false impression. When it comes to the safeguarding of our national integrity and of the ideals upon which it is based we fight bravely without hate or fear. Indeed it has been proved indisputably that narrow fanaticism is in the last analysis self-defeating.

Despite Z. A. Bhutto's somewhat peculiar and contradictory statements since assuming office, one hopes that the result of the recent war, which was entirely due to the Pakistani rulers' warped and aggressive policies, will have brought about a more realistic attitude among the people of Pakistan and that they will follow a more rational foreign policy. This policy, given the geopolitical realities of the Indian subcontinent, must obviously revolve around friendly relations with our country.

India has always desired friendly relations with all her neighbours, including Pakistan. It is reflected in our actions like the release of the 95,000 Pakistani prisoners of war. If our liberal approach also leads to



the ultimate emergence of a more rational attitude in Pakistan, now freed from its heavy and corrosive colonial burden, they will have been doubly fruitful. Indeed, ironical as it may sound at this juncture, the defeat may in the long run turn out to have been a blessing in disguise for Pakistan, as it has freed it from an intolerable geopolitical situation which could simply not survive for long. Looking back, it is surprising that in fact it lasted as long as it did.

For us, as the prime minister reiterated at the historic "victory" function held in the central hall of parliament, there is rejoicing but there can be no complacency. The problems of peace are no less difficult than those of war, and they will require a similar spirit of national unity and dedication if they are to be successfully overcome. The economic burdens of the war have to be met and made good, and the pledge to move forward towards social and economic emancipation fulfilled. All this can be done only if there is a rededication on the part of all sections of society to work unceasingly and add to the national wealth. While we hope that Pakistan will now adopt the path of peace, we cannot for a moment afford to slacken our vigilance in any way or at any time especially as sinister big power moves may once again tend to complicate matters.

In this hour of destiny when India, under a courageous and dynamic leader, has emerged as a major force for peace and stability in Asia, the responsibility upon each one of us who have the privilege of being Indians has tremendously increased. We must be prepared to shoulder new burdens so that the many-splendoured victory leads to the emergence of the new India of our dreams.

## The War—Ideological Perspectives

The splendid performance of our armed forces—the army, navy, and air force working in perfect co-ordination with each other and with the Mukti Bahini in Bangladesh—is a matter of tremendous pride to every Indian. Apart from the military aspect, however, it is important always to remember the ideological dimensions behind the 14-day war which was forced upon us as a direct result of the bigoted and incredibly obtuse policies of the military rulers of West Pakistan. The conflict between Bangladesh and West Pakistan had two clearcut ideological aspects. First, a genuine and unshakable movement for national liberation against colonial and racist domination of the worst type, and second, a political movement based on the triple concepts of democracy, socialism, and secularism against a fascist dictatorship founded upon blatant economic exploitation and political suppression. It will be useful to examine both these points in a little more detail.



The erstwhile province of East Pakistan, which has now proudly emerged as Gana Prajatantri Bangladesh, possesses all the classical attributes of national sovereignty. Its territory is clearly defined, and it was only the aberrations accompanying our independence movement that resulted in the geographical monstrosity known as Pakistan coming into being, with its two wings separated by over a thousand miles of foreign territory. Its language and culture have always been entirely distinct from that of West Pakistan, and despite almost a quarter century of total suppression this cultural distinctiveness could not be stamped out. The attempt to impose Urdu upon the erstwhile province of East Pakistan proved futile, and the link of Islam was in any case too tenuous to ensure political unity, despite the fact that the rulers of West Pakistan utilized every conceivable opportunity to fan the flames of religious bigotry and fanaticism in order to keep the two wings together. Thirdly, the democratic will of the people of Bangladesh was clearly and unequivocally expressed in the first ever free elections held in the area when, under the very nose of the West Pakistani rulers, the people gave Sheikh Mujibur Rehman and his Awami League a truly astonishing majority of 167 out of 169 seats for the now defunct National Assembly. This single act consolidated and crystallized the hopes and aspirations of the seventy-five million people of Bangladesh to carve out for themselves their own future, free from the political domination and economic exploitation that had been their lot ever since the British withdrawal in 1947.

Thus the emergence of an independent Bangladesh is only a logical culmination of the great anticolonial



movement that swept over Asia and Africa after the end of the second world war. The twilight period, when East Bengal was technically independent but virtually a colony, has finally come to an end, and yet another independent nation—the eighth most populous in the world—has come into being with a rich past, and despite the terrible ordeal through which it has had to pass, a bright future. In a world in which nationalism is still a predominant factor in international affairs, the emergence of Bangladesh into the sunlight of freedom should be welcomed by all nations for its own sake as also for its important role in rationalizing and stabilizing the political structure of the subcontinent. In particular, the newly independent nations of Asia and Africa, who have themselves passed through long periods of foreign domination, should hail the birth of Bangladesh remembering that colonialism does not become less obnoxious for its being practised by a non-white power.

The second ideological aspect is the fact that the Bangladesh struggle represents not only a genuine and viable national independence movement but also a classic instance of the conflict between a democratic movement dedicated to building up a secular and socialist order against a fascist military dictatorship for which the only parallel in this century is the malodorous and ill-fated regime of Hitler. The erstwhile state of Pakistan sought to build its polity on the basis of hatred against India in general and Hindus in particular, and the emergence of Bangladesh into independence marks the final collapse of the pernicious two-nation theory which received its first setback when the people of Kashmir faced the initial Pakistani aggression of 1947 with determination and courage. The Gana Prajatantri

Bangladesh has clearly announced its state policy as one of secular democracy in which all citizens irrespective of race and religion will enjoy equal rights.

The rulers of West Pakistan, on the other hand, have never received any popular mandate from their people and their sole claim to authority lies in brute force. Indeed they represent a combination of several unsavoury political features. Their economic base rests upon the exploitation of the masses by a handful of influential West Pakistan families. Their political authority, such as it is, flows from the sheer physical control by the army of the levers of power. Their international relations are governed by an utterly obsessive and irrational hatred of India, and their attitude towards the people of Bangladesh has all the attributes of arrogant and obnoxious racism. Apart from the fact, as our prime minister remarked in parliament, that the West Pakistani regime can hardly claim to speak even for the people of West Pakistan, their unspeakable crimes against the people of Bangladesh will go down in the history of mankind as one of its darkest chapters.

It is unnecessary to recount the horrors that were inflicted by the West Pakistani ruling junta on the people of Bangladesh whose only crime was to have voted in an election organized by the rulers themselves in favour of the party and leader of their choice. This is now part of history. What is indeed astounding, and sad beyond words, is the callousness shown by many of the world's leading democracies, and the fact that the present leadership of the nation that has for decades claimed to be the global champion of democracy against totalitarianism should so blatantly close its eyes to the crystal clear ideological aspect of the struggle by



Bangladesh against the West Pakistani rulers. Equally amazing is the spectacle of the self-styled champion of downtrodden peoples and liberation movements making common cause with the West Pakistani rulers against the mass upsurge of the people of Bangladesh. Strange, indeed, are the manifestations of power politics where all idealism and sense of right and wrong are sacrificed to narrow opportunistic considerations; where the massacre of a million innocent men, women and children and the hounding out of ten million from their hearths and homes appear to be of no account at all; where the *status quo*, howsoever blatantly unjust, is preferred to a solution, howsoever justified, only because it upsets the carefully contrived appletart of a spurious balance of power.

Be that as it may, Bangladesh today represents an irresistible combination of a genuinely anticolonial as well as an anti-fascist democratic movement. Independence, democracy, socialism and secularism have been the watchwords of our own national movement, and it was our proud privilege to have once again fought for these ideals we cherish so deeply. Victory was ours, whatever the stratagems and pressures the desperate junta at Islamabad and its patrons employed, because truth and righteousness were on our side and that of Bangladesh.

The great savant Aurobindo, himself a flaming nationalist and revolutionary leader at the turn of the century, writing about such hours of destiny when history is written with the blood and suffering of a nation, has said, "But being pure cast aside all fear; for the hour is often terrible, a fire and a whirlwind and a tempest, a treading of the winepress of the wrath of



God; but he who can stand up in it on the truth of his purpose is he who shall stand."

The six hundred and thirty-five million peoples of India and Gana Prajatantri Bangladesh stand firm in the truth of their purpose, let the world take note. The irresistible and irreversible tide of history swept us surely and steadily towards a victory that was not only ours but that of the ideals for which both India and Bangladesh stand.

## 19

### Challenges before Women

Without going back into ancient history, it will suffice to say that from the time of India's renaissance in the middle of the nineteenth century the role of women in our national movement has been a crucial one. The origins of the national movement in India were in fact in the social reform movements that began in the nineteenth century: Raja Rammohun Roy and the Brahmo Samaj, Maharishi Devinder Nath Thakur and the Adi Brahmo Samaj, Keshav Chandra Sen and the Brahmo Samaj of India in Bengal, Bhandarkar and Ranade with the Prarthana Samaj in Maharashtra, or Dayanand Saraswati with Arya Samaj—all these movements began very largely with efforts to rehabilitate the status of women in India.

It is a remarkable fact that the role of women in our freedom movement has probably been unique in the history of the world. I do not think there is any other country in the freedom movement of which

women have been so fully and actively involved as they were in ours. Of course a large part of this credit goes to Gandhi who was able to infuse and inspire women belonging to all communities and all social classes, including a number of foreign women who came to India and worked here for the welfare and liberation of our country and did so much to make India what it is today.

As a symbol, as it were, of the role of women we have today Indira Gandhi at the helm of our nation. It is indeed a proud thing that India, which for so many years was accused of having ill-treated and suppressed its women, should be the first large country in the world to have a woman prime minister and to have given in its constitution completely equal rights to women. I was in Switzerland last year and was surprised to learn that even today the voting and political rights of women in Switzerland are not entirely at par with those of men!

Apart from the political role of women, however, the major role of social emancipation is something which needs close attention. Mere political freedom, merely writing into the constitution equal rights for women, is not sufficient. In fact, political freedom was only the prerequisite for a movement of total revolution in this country which must include social and economic emancipation. And here I feel that somehow the zest and zeal for social reform that was visible in India before independence seems to have lost the edge. Perhaps one of the reasons is we feel that the constitution is there with equal rights for all and therefore a struggle is not necessary.

But social revolution is not something we can get



merely by the constitution. This is something for which constant effort has got to be continued. I would like to see voluntary associations in this country very much more active than they are today. There is too much of a tendency to depend upon government; institutions which used to be self-sufficient are totally dependent upon government grants and government aid. Of course, government aid should be given and it should be given in greater measure than it is today. But it will be a sorry day if our social reform becomes dependent upon government grants. It is imperative that we reactivate the social conscience of the nation towards which women's organizations like the All India Women's Conference can play an extremely important role.

As the prime minister has said, there is no sphere of activity in the nation which does not directly affect women. Therefore the sphere of women's activities is unlimited. But there are some special aspects which deserve much greater attention. The first of those is population control. Unfortunately, despite all the progress we have made in the last 26 years, the actual impact on the living standard of our people has been very largely negatived and diluted by the population increase. This is something which women's organizations can take up as a crusade because ultimately it is the women upon whom the burden and the difficulties of a large family fall. And therefore I would like to see women's associations become more active with regard to population control and family planning programmes, not depending merely upon government efforts but supplementing them by programmes of mass education, particularly in rural areas.

Secondly, there is the other question of rising prices

which has become so acute a problem in our country, particularly over the last few months. There are, of course, many causes of this rise which are beyond the control of any organization. But I am convinced that if the consumers can bind themselves together and if they can create an active public opinion against black marketing and hoarding, a large part of the battle would have been won. Here again I submit that it is the women who have to take the initiative. Men are too busy either working or perhaps blackmarketing! It is the women who have really got to organize these consumer cooperative and consumer resistance movements all over the country in order to see that this terrible evil of blackmarketing and hoarding does not remain like a curse upon this country.

Thirdly, there is the exploitation of women and children in various forms whether it is in labour or in any other activity. This is something against which the voice of women's organizations should be raised and the status of women in every way safeguarded.

Then there is this question of social evils like dowry. At one time dowry was looked upon as a feudal vice, and it was only the feudal society which was held responsible for this pernicious system. Well, the feudal society has disappeared. But what is happening to dowry in our new society? I am sorry to say that, at least in north India, the evil of dowry has become even more entrenched and even more "scientific" than before. I understand there are regular schedules worked out. I believe it is the engineer boys who get the biggest dowry, a car and a certain amount of money, closely followed by doctors and various other professions. Now this is a disgraceful situation, that



today in free India we should virtually be selling our daughters at the altar of this pernicious social custom. Women leaders particularly have got to create an example. It is not enough to merely lecture to the masses. You can give your daughters whatever you like; naturally everybody loves his daughter. But this system of dowry—payment in cash or kind of a certain amount at the other end before marriage—is something which has got to stop. It is against all principles of social emancipation and morality. I am surprised that the zeal of the social reformer which used to thunder against this practice before 1947 has disappeared. Nobody seems to be talking about it anymore, perhaps because everybody is busy collecting dowry for his own daughters.

What I am really trying to say is that all these factors that I have mentioned are parts of the fundamental problem we are facing today, the alarming erosion in morality and in all standards. I am not a puritanical person; I am not really talking about morality purely in the narrow sense of the term. This is an emancipated era, rigid modes are changing as they should and must. But whereas this revolution should be welcome, it is important that a new search for cultural values should emerge. Revolution does not mean the collapse of all standards. It should mean that the standards which are no longer relevant, which have lost their validity and vitality should go and must be replaced by new standards. What is happening today is that all standards are collapsing. I am sorry to say that personal integrity seems to be on the decline, and there is largescale corruption in our society at all levels. If this is not halted it will become the greatest danger to free India. The



real danger to India is neither from Pakistan nor from China, nor from political instability. It is this inner cancer that is eating into the core of this nation. The danger is this collapse of faith in verities and the absence of any new standards to take their place.

Therefore I appeal to you, to the women of this country who have always been the guardians of deeper values, that the time has now come when you must bring about virtually a cultural revolution, a spiritual revolution in this country. It is only then that we will be able to meet the tremendous challenges that lie ahead.

## Changing India and Women

The problems facing India today are such as deserve the most careful consideration by all, regardless of sex. The basic problems of change we face today flow from the impact of modernization upon a traditional society. If India is to change peacefully and creatively it is the women of India who will have to act as the primary agents of change.

We live today in an age of science and technology, and if India is to grow into a prosperous nation, if the living standards of our vast millions are to rise substantially, if we are to take our rightful place among the great powers of the world, it can only be by the increasing application of science and technology to the problems of our development. Whether in agriculture or industry, in trade or commerce, in social welfare or education, we have to adopt modern techniques and concepts if this nation is to make up the backlog of centuries within the next decade or two.

In an ancient land like ours, however, modernization cannot mean a traumatic break with the past. Our roots in the past are so deep, and our cultural heritage itself so rich and impressive, that any attempt at a complete break will land us in utter disaster. It is now being increasingly realized by sociologists and psychologists alike that a traumatic break with the past renders a society vulnerable to mass psychosis, and creates acute problems of individual and group adjustment.

What we require, therefore, is creative change whereby we retain what is best in our past and yet boldly repudiate such practices as militate against the basic concept that has sustained Indian civilization through the centuries. As I understand it, this concept has been that of the potential divinity of each individual.

The *Upanishads* have a marvellous phrase for the human race—*अमृतस्य पुत्राः* (children of immortality)—based on the conviction that each individual embodies a spark of the divinity that permeates the entire cosmos. Closely flowing from this concept is the corollary that the goal of human existence is to fan this spark into the flame of spiritual realization. However—and this is a vital point often missed even by otherwise perceptive thinkers—it is not as if we are taught to ignore mundane activity. On the contrary, the four goals of human life include material wealth and physical enjoyment. *Moksha* follows, not precedes, *kama* and *artha*. Our spiritual fulfilment, therefore, is not to be sought in an escape from the trials of life, but rather in a discriminating life affirmation. This needs to be stressed because many recent commentators, foreign as well as Indian,



have tried to make out that there is something inherent in our philosophical tradition that militates against economic development.

In this context let us briefly examine some of the problems that face us today. I will begin with the family, which has been and remains the basic unit of society ever since human civilization began. In India the old concept of the joint family is crumbling, and we are moving towards what has been called the "nuclear" family consisting of the husband, wife, and children. To my mind this is an extremely welcome development, because whereas the joint family had certain advantages in the past, today it militates against that growth of individual responsibility and participation which is so necessary for the progress of the country. In particular, the position of the woman improves greatly in the nuclear family and, endowed as she is by our constitution and post-independence legislation with full political and legal equality, it enables her to play a much more positive role in nation-building than was possible for the last many centuries. The breakup of the joint family, therefore, far from being a disaster can in fact become the starting point for a new and much more positive role for women in modern India.

Another problem which we face today is the question of untouchability. While this heinous practice has been outlawed by our constitution and severe penalties are prescribed to prevent its observance, we have still not fully shaken off the accumulated prejudice of centuries. It is true that in cities untouchability is now steadily disappearing. But in villages it is still all too often in evidence. If our concept of human divinity is to have any meaning, it is imperative that the practice of un-

touchability must once and for all be rooted out. In this, women have a particularly important role to play, because it is generally considered that in such matters women tend to be more conservative than men, and it is largely around women that such social practices tend to crystallize.

Let us turn next to what is perhaps the most acute problem in India today; over-population. This is a sphere in which women in particular have got to take the major responsibility. Planned families can help build a happier India, and at least every woman who has had the privilege of university education should become a centre for propagating the concept of family planning throughout the length and breadth of this country. Not only in cities but in villages, where the large majority of Indians live, the practice of family planning must, within the next few years, gain universal acceptance. As the sex which really has the more direct stake in its success, women must in this matter be even more committed than men.

Women today are playing an increasingly important part in our national life. Not only can we boast of having a great woman prime minister, one of the three in the world, but in parliament women are among our most articulate and effective participants. This is as it should be, because an equality of vote or constitutional status will have little meaning unless women increasingly come forward to take part in the political life of the nation. Not only in politics but in every sphere of national activity women have a steadily expanding role to play. And yet I cannot refrain from expressing the hope that despite this desirable and necessary participation in the exciting task of nationbuilding, women will



not lose their essential femininity and charm. It will be a sad day if, in their eagerness to become the equal of men, women neglect the development of their feminine nature. It is here that educational institutions specially designed for women must attempt a creative synthesis between imparting education in general subjects and stressing those arts that have always been particularly suited to the feminine personality, such as music and dancing, painting and domestic science.

Indeed, what we must aim at is a creative fusion between two extremes. The idea of the woman as a meek, submissive, and largely helpless appendage, *abala*, is as distorted as that of the over-aggressive and scarcely feminine prototype. Once again our ancient heritage can come to our rescue with its noble concept of woman as the *ardhangini*, equal cosharer with man in the triumphs and tribulations of life, and of the wife as "queen of the home." I can do no better than to end this with a Vedic benediction:

इयमग्ने नारी पतिं विदेष्ट  
सोमो हि राजा सुभगां कृणोति ।  
सुवाना पुत्रान् महिषी भवति  
गत्वा पतिं सुभगा वि राजतु ॥

(May this woman, Agni, find a husband,  
then, verily, King Soma will make her happy.  
May she, bearing sons, be the queen of the home,  
and, fortunate, hold sway, united with her  
husband.)



## Family Planning, Poverty, and Labour

The major problem that we are facing today is the problem of poverty, and every other scheme or activity gains significance only in so far as it helps us to deal with this central issue. It is in this context that we must look upon the whole question of population policy and family planning. It is quite clear that poverty is the main cause for the massive increase in our population, because it has been seen that almost invariably the rate of population growth registers a sharp decline whenever the living standards of the people begin to rise. I do not, therefore, subscribe to the view that over-population is the main cause of our poverty. The optimum size of population, for any country, inevitably depends on a number of economic and social variables, especially the conditions of production and the status of modern technology. However, it seems to me indisputable that in the present situation our high rate of population growth is definitely

acting as a negative factor in our economic growth. Quite frankly, though, I do not think there is any real advantage at this stage in getting involved in a long, theoretical argument as to whether poverty is the cause of high population or vice versa. It will be more useful to concentrate on trying to see what specifically can be done in the organized sector to spread family planning education among the working classes; increasing facilities to help them limit the size of their families in their own interest must be provided.

The organized sector, particularly industrial labour, has always played a key role in social and economic transformation. The organized sector covers a population of about 2 crores, including the families. By its very nature this segment of society is better organized, more cohesive, concentrated in comparatively fewer areas, and thus in a better position to appreciate the advantages of family planning and to give a lead in this regard to the rest of the nation. It would therefore be relevant to discuss here the problems relating to population policies, family planning, and labour. However, it is not my intention to go into the details of the various issues involved. I would only like to make a few basic points to clarify the approach that I have adopted to the question of family planning, which is the keystone of any broader population policy. I will not deal with such issues as urbanization and other demographic phenomena, nor will I detail developments in contraceptives of various types. I will confine myself to three basic formulations which underlie my approach to family planning:

(a) To begin with, I would like to reiterate that I look upon family planning not as some magic panacea



for all our ills, but as one of the many instruments that we have to use in the massive assault on the citadels of poverty that we have envisaged in the fifth plan. It must become part of our total approach to the socio-economic problems that we face at this crucial juncture in our history. It is not possible any longer to look upon family planning as a programme standing in isolation. It has got to be integrated into the entire complex of health and nutrition programmes, and must reach the remotest rural areas and the urban slums where the vast majority of our people reside. For this purpose we have envisaged under the minimum needs programme the delivery of an integrated package of health, nutrition and family planning services covering the rural areas. This will, of course, require a major reorientation of our administrative, training, and organizational procedures, for without a virtual revolution in this sphere the new approach cannot succeed.

(b) A corollary to the integration that I have mentioned is that family planning must be transformed from a programme of the Government of India into a genuine mass movement. For this purpose an entirely new motivational strategy will have to be worked out, in which individual monetary incentives are kept to the minimum, necessary to cover loss of wages, and the educational aspects of the programme highlighted in a manner which will make it truly relevant to the masses. State governments, local bodies down to and including the panchayats, voluntary organizations as well as the organized sector, all will have to be involved in a massive effort, if real headway is to be made. Although a great deal of imaginative work has gone into the family planning campaign over the last decade or so, it



seems often to have been somewhat elitist and urban-oriented. The bias will have to shift to the rural areas during the fifth plan so that family planning becomes part of our broader concern for the welfare of the weaker and more vulnerable sections of our society.

(c) The position of women in society is absolutely central to any programme of family planning. Apart from the guarantees in our constitution, a whole spectrum of social, educational, and legal measures need to be taken to ensure that women in fact do enjoy an equal position in all spheres of national life including the family. One of the steps that can have an immediate impact on the rate of population growth and the status of women is to raise the legal age of marriage for girls to 18 and for boys to 21, and to ensure that the laws in this regard are strictly implemented. The interests of working women will have to be fully safeguarded. I was disturbed when I learnt that the percentage of women workers was showing a steady decline. This is an unfortunate and retrograde development which goes against our declared policy, and if allowed to continue will have a negative impact on our family planning movement.

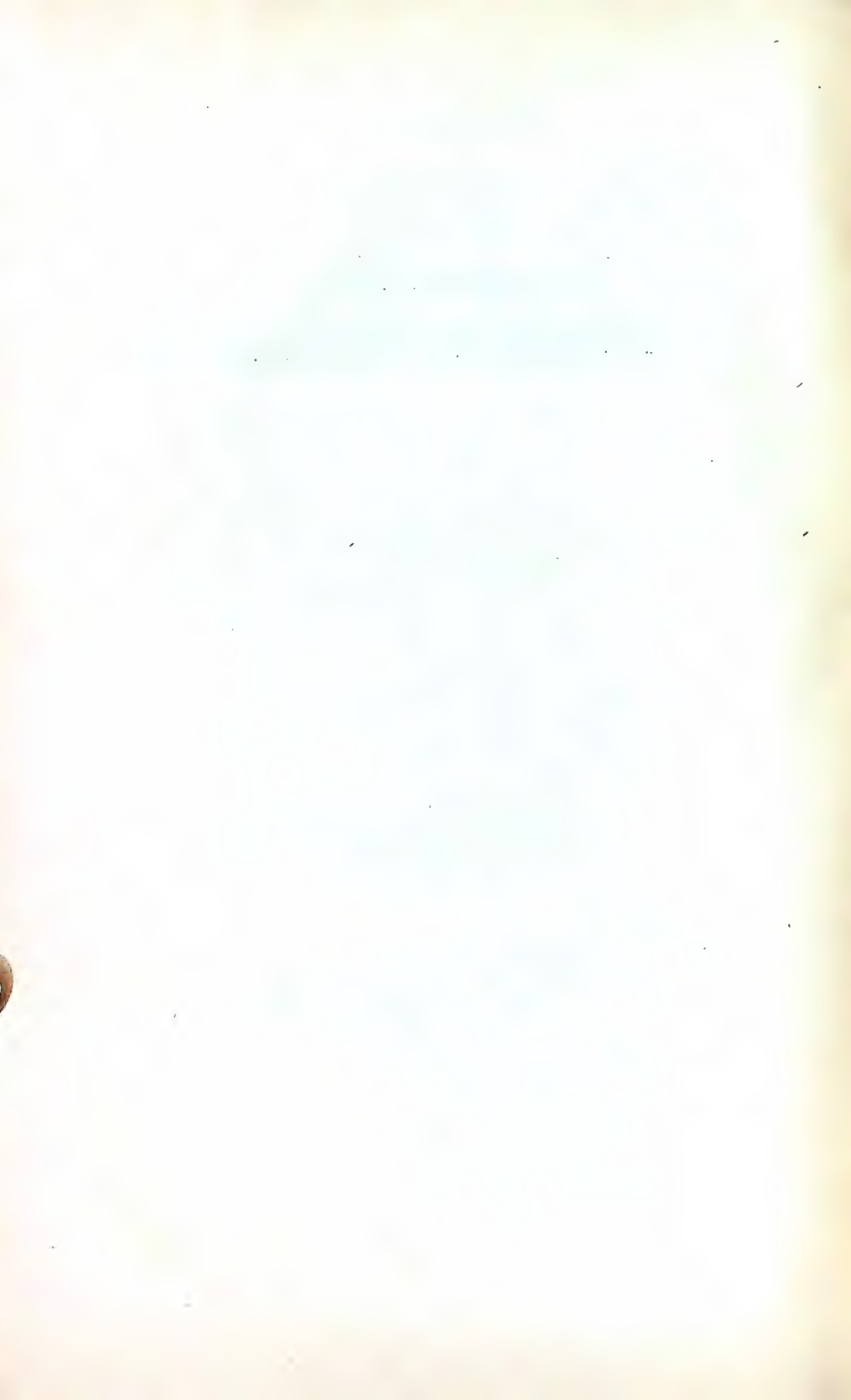
1974 is being observed by the United Nations as World Population Year. For a developing country like ours, where vast millions still live below the standard required for a decent human existence, World Population Year will gain significance only if it is looked upon as an integral part of our continued struggle to break the poverty barrier that has suffocated our country for many centuries. Indeed, even from the broader global viewpoint it is becoming increasingly clear that affluence and poverty cannot coexist indefinitely on space-

ship earth, and that if the welfare of the human race is to be ensured it will be necessary for poverty to be virtually abolished before the end of this century. Population and family planning policies, therefore, derive their ultimate sanction from the compulsions of this global battle against poverty that has to be joined.

**SECTION III**

**TOURISM AND WILD LIFE**





## 22

### Tourism—The World's Largest Industry

In the last two decades tourism has emerged as the world's largest industry, and the fastest growing. It is estimated that in 1972 international tourism involved 200 million people the world over, and if we add the figures of domestic tourism, which are more difficult to compile, I think there would be another 500 million. It is, therefore, a unique phenomenon in the history of the human race. Previously in human history there have been vast movements but they have either been migrations or invasions.

This concept of millions of people travelling for peaceful purposes is essentially and peculiarly a phenomenon of the second half of the twentieth century. It has been made possible by two major factors. The first is growing affluence in certain parts of the world which enables large numbers of people to spend the money that is necessary to go on holiday. Without affluence it would not have been possible for inter-

national tourism to have achieved the dimensions we see before us. The second prerequisite was the technological breakthrough in the field of aviation, which has now made it possible for large numbers of people to be transported to the far corners of the earth at a reasonable cost which is steadily declining, thanks to the charter business. So we have now reached a situation in which tourism is no longer confined either to the very rich or to the eccentric, as it was in the first half of the century, but something that has become a genuinely mass movement, cutting across race and religion, nationality and political ideology, language and vocation and making the peoples of the world mingle and mix.

A major phenomenon of this nature has far-reaching implications, both in the short term and in the long run, and these implications need to be studied. There is, to begin with, the economic implication that tourism is simply the world's biggest industry. It is estimated that the turnover in international tourism in 1972 was US \$ 21,700 million. This is a staggering amount, and one can clearly see its tremendous implications. Millions of people throughout the world now depend for their employment upon tourism, both those who are directly involved in the tourism plant—hotels, motels, and other services directly used by tourists—and those who are indirectly involved; transportation industry, travel agencies, entertainment industry, arts and crafts, the souvenir industry, and so on. Thus millions derive benefit from tourism and in developing countries particularly we feel the scope for tourism development and its economic advantages are very important.

Unfortunately the developing nations of the world still enjoy only a very small fraction of the total tourism



turnover in the world. This is something which must be remedied, and we hope it will be remedied as the years go by, because tourism is very important for us from two points of view. Firstly, from the point of view of earning much-needed foreign exchange, I do not think there is a more pleasant or a more effective way of transferring surplus resources from the affluent to the developing societies than through tourism. And if this tourism to developing nations grows, we will find that a lot of the resources we require for our development will be available to us through it. Secondly, of course, within our own countries tourism can become a major economic factor. There is the wellknown "multiplier" effect whereby every unit of money spent in tourism circulates in the economy and thereby brings about an increasing area of benefit to the people concerned. And in developing nations, where economic development and the battle against poverty must get the highest priority, tourism can be a very positive and a very definite factor for growth.

Then there are the sociological implications. Tourism brings together people belonging to different countries, practising different life-styles, speaking different languages. It throws them together. There is a great mingling of cultures, and this naturally has its effects. Some of the effects are sometimes negative. There is a lot of talk nowadays about culture shock, and the fact that when people belonging to the more affluent countries come face to face with poverty they feel very uneasy. I personally do not think that culture shock is such a bad thing after all, because two-thirds of the world is still not affluent and there is no particular advantage in the affluent societies trying to pretend that poverty does

not exist. Indeed this culture shock, in a way, can be used as a valuable means for bringing about a better understanding and a deeper awareness among the affluent nations of the difficulties and problems of developing countries.

But apart from this somewhat negative factor, the positive factors of tourism are very clear. It helps to break down prejudices, barriers, suspicions that exist between nations. The very best way of getting to know another country is to go there. When vast numbers travel, the narrow, rigid boundaries that keep people in compartments naturally tend to get weakened and we move towards better international understanding.

Thirdly, there are the environmental implications of tourism which deserve serious attention. I had the privilege two years ago to attend the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment held in Stockholm, which symbolized the growing importance the people of the world attach to maintaining and improving the quality of life on this planet. For thousands of years since he began his long and tortuous history man has used and misused the resources of this planet to such an extent that today there is a very real fear that many of the irreversible processes that have been set afoot will cause grave harm. I know there is a big debate on, and there is a great deal of controversy among ecologists. I do not at the moment want to get into an argument, but it must be admitted that environmental pollution has become a serious menace. Many of the beaches of North America and Western Europe bear mute testimony to the havoc that can be wrought by uncontrolled development of tourism. The cluttering of beaches, the terrible neon signs and architectural



monstrosities that have come up in various parts of the world in the name of tourism; the travesty of development that has often taken place in the name of tourism whether in mountain areas or forests or on the beaches—these are all pointers to the fact that the environmental processes must be kept in mind whenever we bring about tourism development.

I would, however, like to put before you the other aspect. I feel that tourism development can become a positive factor for improving the environment, if we use intelligence and a certain amount of basic planning and aesthetics in the whole process. For example, carefully cleaning ancient monuments, clearing the areas around the monuments and improving them for tourism purposes is a case in point where, through tourism, the environment is not degraded but can in fact be improved. Again there is wildlife which is deteriorating and vanishing so rapidly. Thanks to tourism, new efforts are afoot to try and safeguard these beautiful animals, and to preserve the environment in which these animals live so that they can continue to be a source of joy and interest to future generations.

Tourism must be used as a positive factor in environmental improvement. We must harness the best available talent, whether it is landscapers or architects, designers or decorators, town planners or area planners. Whenever there is a major tourism development project all these factors must be taken into view and we must develop with our eyes open and with a positive decision that these environmental factors will be kept in mind. Any type of development without control, without any thought given to environmental factors, can in fact prove to be disastrous and will ultimately be



counter-productive for tourism itself. Many tourist resorts, particularly in the more affluent countries, are now reaching saturation point. You have a beautiful beach, but if you have so many thousands of people on it that you cannot see the sand, there is hardly any advantage of having the beach at all.

In this entire multifaceted phenomenon of international tourism with its economic implications, its sociological implications, and the environmental factors that are operating, the International Union of Travel Organizations (IUOTO), which represents 109 nations, has a very crucial role to play. It is soon to be converted into the World Tourism Organization under the United Nations, an important and necessary step which India has strongly supported ever since it was first mooted. I understand that about 40 nations have already ratified the new statutes, and when the necessary number ratifies it the great new organization will come into being. As we see it, the World Tourism Organization will be the apex international body which will do a number of things; it can pool information and experience of the various nations in tourism development so that the experience of one country can be made available to others and can be utilized in their own developmental processes; it can encourage uniformity in government regulations with regard to tourism and try and bring about the simplifications of travel formalities. Being a tourist myself I know how trying it can be when you go from country to country and there are different types of tourism regulations, different signs, different forms which have to be filled in.

It is becoming increasingly difficult for travellers in this space age to adjust themselves to the various

requirements. Now a body like the World Tourism Organization, not statutorily but because of the great prestige and authority it will have, can go a long way in bringing about the required simplifications and uniformity in these sort of regulations. Then there is the necessity for coordinating infrastructural norms. A case in point is hotel classification where, unless some basic system of classification is followed the world over, it will become difficult to really ensure that the system follows common norms. These aspects can be well tackled by the World Tourism Organization and the various committees that it will set up. Similarly the organization can and should organize special studies, regional studies, area studies in which the problems of tourism in that particular region or area are studied in depth by a team of people drawn from different fields—architects, landscapers, economists, sociologists, planners, and so on—so that a total view can be taken of the problems of particular areas. In this total view the environmental hazards that I mentioned have got to be kept very much in mind. And, finally, we hope that the World Tourism Organization will also be able to channelise expertise and resources into developing countries for growth in tourism. This is a point I must stress again. The share of the developing countries in tourism growth has still been unimpressive, and we hope that while the World Tourism Organization will of course be an international body which has to take a global view of tourism problems, the special problems and needs of developing countries will be kept very much in mind.

India had the privilege of hosting the IUOTO annual conference in 1956, and again an IUOTO seminar in 1973 on physical planning and area



development. At that time I assured the president, the secretary general, and the delegates that India will always be ready to support and assist the World Tourism Organization in every way required.

We have in India an age-old tradition of hospitality. Many thousands of years ago in the *Vedas* there is a famous phrase *Atithi Devo Bhava* which means that a visitor should be treated with great respect, almost as if he were a divine personage. This is our ancient tradition, but we in India are now trying to convert our traditional hospitality into the infrastructure of modern tourism. I do think we have a unique spectrum of tourist attractions in this country. First of all our natural surroundings, from the mighty Himalayas in the north down to the south where three great oceans meet at the foot of India; and our developmental programmes whether it is the Gulmarg winter sports resort in the Himalayas in the north or the Kovalam beach 2,500 miles away down right at the foot of India, we have a magnificent country physically. We have wildlife which is now receiving increasing importance. We have magnificent creations of man through ages, some of the most beautiful monuments in the world, whether it is the immortal Taj Mahal or the great and magnificent temples of South India or the caves of Elephanta, Ajanta and Ellora or the temples of Konarak and Bhubaneswar in East India. In our country we have also a living and continuing tradition of dance, music and painting, festivals and drama which have come down many thousands of years and which have constantly been enriched by new generations of artists. And above all we have a basically very friendly people and a steadily growing tourism infrastructure.



All this combines to make India a very interesting and unique tourism destination, and I hope that tourists in increasing numbers will be able to sample some of our actual tourism attractions and come back for more. I may mention that I myself happened to be a born tourist, because I was literally born in a hotel at a tourist resort in the famous Mediterranean resort of Cannes in the Hotel Martines. So I am a born tourist, and when I was inaugurating the hoteliers convention I said to them that my relationship with hotels dates back to before I was born. I am not talking of my past life but of my present, because when I checked in, it was three months before I was expected to be born.

I hope that those who come to India from different parts of the world will take advantage of their visit and see something of our country, and witness our traditional hospitality.

Above all we genuinely feel that tourism can be a major force for peace and harmony and understanding in the presentday world. Mankind is at a crucial crossroads of destiny after thousands of years of history. Today we have a situation in which science and technology have given man the capacity, if he wisely uses it, to abolish poverty, misery, disease and suffering from the face of the earth and build a magnificent future for the human race. Yet the same science and technology, if used for destructive purposes, will destroy not only the human race but all life on this planet. It is, therefore, a delicately poised situation, as we have a world which is still torn by hatred and suspicion. In a world like this we feel that tourism is and can increasingly be a major force for harmony, understanding and peace.

## Prospects for Indian Tourism

I think we have come a long way since 1967 in regard to the very positive and encouraging developments that have taken place in the field of tourism. Whether it is the growth of tourism consciousness in the country, or the steady strengthening of our infrastructure, or the vast improvement in our promotional efforts abroad, I think it is correct to say that today tourism in India has come to the point of a breakthrough. I would not claim that the breakthrough has yet been achieved, but I would say that we have brought Indian tourism to a point where a breakthrough has now become a very definite possibility.

Statistically speaking, we have exceeded our target of 4,00,000 tourists in 1973. And this despite the setback in 1971 and early in 1972. I am also sure that, given the necessary inputs, we will be able to achieve the new target that I fixed of doubling the tourism inflow up to the year 1978 and getting 8,00,000 and finally reaching



the million mark by 1980. I now feel that these are targets that are well within our reach, provided that the necessary requisites are given to us in the central sector, the state sector, and in the private sector.

I would like to reiterate the point I have been consistently making over the last few years, which is that tourism is essentially a cooperative venture. It is not something that government can run all by itself. Tourism requires the full cooperation not only of all ministries of the Government of India and of the state governments—which is very important in a federal set-up like ours—but also of the various segments of the travel trade, the hoteliers, restaurateurs, transport operators, travel agents, and so on. It is only if these various elements cooperate with one another and include in their ambit other organizations such as local bodies and the chambers of commerce, that the whole tourism network we are building up can really become effective.

I have spoken on various occasions with regard to international tourism, the tremendous advantage that can flow from it, the massive earnings of foreign exchange that become available and that are so important at this stage of the development of our economy, the fact that international tourism is an important influence for peace and harmony in the world. I would only like to say that we are enriching our tourism package by putting into it certain new elements. Apart from our traditional tourism elements, the monuments and the magnificent scenery, there are at least three new elements we are injecting into our package. One is wildlife to which I attach a great deal of importance because I happen to be chairman of the Indian Board for Wildlife.



In East Africa, for example, tourism revolves entirely around wildlife and it is one of the major things we hope to develop in the fifth plan period. The second major new aspect will be our beaches. Beach tourism in this country is only starting. We have some of the most magnificent beaches in the world, and I am sure as we develop them, more and more tourists will be attracted here on destination tours. The inauguration of the Kovalam beach complex a couple of months ago, and of the Mahabalipuram beach complex just a few days ago, are important pointers to the role that beaches are going to play in increasing our tourism development. Thirdly, there is this small winter sports component that we are putting into our package. Here again it is only a beginning, but we feel if our winter sports can catch on they will further enrich the spectrum of tourist activities and tourist attractions that we have in India.

In this entire process the role of travel agents is a key and crucial one, because it is the travel agent who packages and processes all these various attractions and presents them to the tourists. There is tremendous scope here for imagination, for intelligence, and for drive and dynamism, because they have to pick out of this whole vast assemblage of Indian tourist attractions those particular components that can go into a special package, and these packages have now to be specially designed for various groups. Travel agents have got to design them for age groups, for affinity groups, and for various different types of facilities. This is a challenge to their ingenuity and intelligence for they must be able to fit all that India has to offer into a number of different combinations and permutations, put them together in an attractive package, and sell them to the visitors.

Therefore, although we may do whatever we can to build up the infrastructure and whatever we can do to promote it abroad, it is the travel agents who really play the crucial role in actually selling the product. I have, right from the beginning, appreciated the importance of the travel agents in their role as the salesmen and retailers of our tourist attractions and, therefore, always tried to associate them with various bodies that we set up.

But apart from international tourism, I would like to highlight the importance of domestic tourism in India where I feel that our travel agents have not really paid adequate attention over the last few years. In our understandable and necessary interest in getting the foreign tourist here to earn foreign exchange I am beginning to feel that domestic tourism tends to get neglected. After all, we must remember that domestic tourism has necessarily to be the base of any tourism pyramid we may construct in this country. We may get half a million or a million foreign tourists, but if you look at the domestic field in a country so vast and varied and as highly populated as ours, there are literally crores of people who travel every year. Where are the package tours for Indian travellers in rupee payment? I see a lot of brochures for the foreign market with intelligently planned Indian tours but what about the home market? Let us say I want to travel in India, I want to go to the south. I must have a proper tour of the south in Indian rupees, and the travel agents have got to be equally interested in selling that tour. I would like to make a special point here: even if it is in the travel trade's immediate interest to get foreign tours, they should not make the mistake of neglecting domestic tours. We are



a country that is developing steadily. More and more people will want to travel. Where are the intelligently worked out pilgrim tours in this country? We are developing youth hostels as you know. Where are the low cost tours so that our youngsters in India can travel and see the countryside?

I feel that these aspects have not received the attention they deserve. I would like the travel agents of India to pay special attention to this and I hope that we will see a number of intelligently worked out rupee tours for domestic tourism in due course.

We must never forget that one of the major facets in tourism is this aspect of national integration, of bringing people together, of getting the people of India to travel from one part of the country to another. There is so much to see in our country. People talk about going abroad; I wonder how many people have actually seen our country, how many people have seen the glory and magnificence of the temples in south India or the special tribal charms of eastern India. It is essential that these places be given importance and quite apart from the national integration aspect, it is also essential for developing tourism into a major economic activity.

Today one of the biggest problems in this country is unemployment. Tourism, both domestic and international, has a tremendous employment potential both directly in the tourism plant—the accommodation facilities, restaurants, transport operators, travel agents, guides, and so on; and also the indirect employment in handicrafts and other types of industries that are ancillary to the tourism complex. Both from the point of view of national integration and from the point of view of making tourism a major economic



activity, we have to pay much more attention to the domestic market.

I would also like to say that, with the setting up of the IUOTO regional office in Colombo, we must also begin to pay special attention to tourism from neighbouring countries—from East Asia and South Asia in general, and in particular from neighbouring countries like Nepal, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Afghanistan, Bhutan and Pakistan—later when they are more in a tourism mood than at present. We have got to develop the domestic market. We have got to develop the immediate neighbouring market, and we have to develop the international market. These are the concentric circles in the whole tourism process, and we have got to pay attention to the first two aspects also and not only to the more glamorous and perhaps more lucrative foreign market. That of course has got to be developed in every way, but the other two markets, the domestic market and the neighbouring market, have also to be developed. In this country we are going through a difficult period, but that should not deter us. Our present difficulties here flow from two major points. One is the impact of the war; just because we won the war it does not mean we have not had to pay the price for it. After all, war is always a very expensive affair and it takes a great deal out of the economic setup of a developing nation. And, secondly, of course the drought. Therefore we are going through a period of economic difficulty, but this should not deter us. There is too often nowadays, I find, a tendency towards cynicism. A nation like ours, simply cannot afford the luxury of cynicism or apathy. We are engaged in one of the greatest undertakings that the human race has ever seen since the dawn of civilized

society on this earth. We are trying to build for one-seventh of the human race a better life through democratic means. It has never been attempted before and, therefore, we must have this feeling of excitement, of participating in this great adventure. We must realize that upon what we will do now will depend the future of a vast section of humanity. I am sure if we have confidence in ourselves and confidence in our people, we will overcome these difficulties. I like to think that tourism, although a small segment of the entire effort, is a growing segment and will, in the years to come, play an increasingly meaningful role in building for the people of India that better life to which we are committed.

## 24

### Declaration on the Human Environment

The first ever declaration on the human environment is a document which, despite the sneers of the critics and the jeers of the prophets of doom, will surely rank as an important milestone in the history of the human race and will be of significance to generations yet unborn. It was of course unfortunate that a very important section of the world community was not represented at the UN Conference on the Human Environment held at Stockholm on 16 June 1972. But it is sincerely hoped that the governments of the unrepresented countries also will, at an appropriate and early stage, subscribe to the principles enshrined in this document.

The concept of one earth is not new. Five thousand years ago the seers of the *Rig Veda* put forward the concept of *Vasudhawa Kutumbakam* (the human race as one family). However, the actualization of this concept, as against the purely conceptual idea, has only now become possible with the tremendous explosion in



science and technology. But this very explosion has also made possible the total destruction of all life on this planet. There is therefore a new awareness of the urgent necessity of human unity as a prerequisite for survival, of which the conference marked an entirely new and historic beginning, a new approach to the problems of the human race.

The preparation of the declaration has been a fascinating exercise. Over a hundred nations with different political, economic, and social systems worked together for days and nights—more nights than days. I would like to pay my tribute to the distinguished representative from Tunisia who chaired the working group, the vice-chairmen from Iran and Ecuador, and the rapporteur from Canada who did a truly magnificent job with incredible and monumental patience. The document is not perfect. It is the result of a number of compromises and different points of view being hammered out. For example, on the Preamble the distinguished delegates from France, the Holy See and others thought that the Indian draft was the most superior of all the drafts submitted. But in a spirit of compromise and cooperation, all of us to the extent possible cooperated in the process of bringing out an agreed draft.

We are happy that two new principles proposed by India on the safeguarding of our wildlife heritage, which is in imminent danger of extinction, and the other on ocean pollution, have been accepted.

There are two aspects of the declaration which need to be particularly stressed. First, the problems of poverty and development. Millions of human beings today live in subhuman conditions, and this constitutes

a degradation of the human environment which is no longer tolerable. The developing nations were keen that their aspirations and needs should be reflected in the document and that their genuine fear that the problems of environment may lead to a sidetracking of the processes of development should also be reflected.

My delegation was not fully satisfied with the result of the deliberations in the working group, but the document as presented did reflect to a greater extent these important points of view than did the original document. On one earth you cannot have islands of prosperity in an ocean of poverty. Poverty anywhere is a threat to prosperity everywhere. In the international community developing nations are now increasingly conscious of the fact that they should no longer be condemned to a situation in which the human spirit cannot flower to its full potential.

Secondly, there is the important question of peace. As our prime minister Indira Gandhi said in her address, the most urgent and basic problems are the problems of peace. India is against the use and testing of nuclear, biological, and chemical weapons, because if these weapons are tested or used all talk of improving the quality of life and of environment becomes utterly unrealistic, because these weapons contain such an obnoxious capacity not only to degenerate but to destroy the environment.

Is this planet of ours going to develop as a fit home for the human race, or will it become a charred and uninhabitable object hurtling aimlessly through space? Conflict and war are basic challenges before the UN.

Five thousand years ago, one of our seers had this to

say about our planet:

*Earth, in which are the sea, the river and other  
waters,  
In which food and cornfields have come to be,  
In which live all that breathe and that move,  
May she confer on us the finest of her yield  
Whatever I dig from the Earth  
May that have quick growth again,  
O purifier, may we not injure thy vitals or thy heart  
Wakeful through a long life  
May we become bearers of tribute to thee.*

It is time we bear tribute and repay our debt to this earth, to this long-suffering planet which has nurtured our race over the millenia and brought it up from the darkness of matter through the long processes of evolution to its present state of consciousness—with its joys and sorrows, triumphs and tragedies, cruelty and compassion, ignorance and wisdom.



## Project Tiger

Man is certainly the most creative of all the many species that have inhabited this planet ever since life began millions of years ago; creative not only in as much as the population of mankind itself is increasing tremendously, but also in the deeper sense of having produced great works of art, architecture and engineering, and of having changed the face of this planet in many ways. Indeed with science and technical development growing apace the capacity of man to change the environment is steadily increasing, and it is a very impressive effort if you look at it over the last 5,000 years. But it is also true that man is perhaps the most destructive of all the species the world has known, because in this very process of creation and of changing the environment in which he lives he has wrought irreparable and often irreversible damage to many of the natural resources which this planet possesses.

It has only very recently been realized that the planet

upon which we live is a sort of a spaceship in which the resources are strictly limited. It is only now when a photograph of the world was taken from outer space that for the first time it was dramatically and irrefutably brought home to the consciousness of man that we are a single eco-unit. However much we may be divided by political boundaries and geographical barriers, the fact is that from outer space our world is a single unified and indivisible unit. There is now a growing awareness that unless something radical is done to reverse the process of environmental destruction and pollution, mankind itself may well be endangered much sooner than most people realize.

I had the privilege a couple of years ago to be in Stockholm at the time of the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment. It was a dramatic and moving experience because the nations of the world gathered there, irrespective of political ideology or other differences, had a unanimity of opinion that something radical had to be done to save the quality of human life and to enrich human environment. This is perhaps even more important in developing countries, because they are at a low level of economic growth. If, in addition to their poverty, their natural environment also becomes polluted they will really be getting the worst of both worlds.

There is one view which feels that the whole ecological and environmental problem is only a sort of luxury which can be indulged in only by the affluent societies. It is true that the affluent societies are rapidly becoming "effluent" and will become more and more so if they do not do something about it. But I would submit that for developing societies it is equally, if not more, impor-

tant that these environmental values be injected into our consciousness and into our planning.

We all owe a debt of gratitude to the prime minister who, perhaps alone among the leaders in the developing world, has realized the tremendous importance of these environmental values and has set up, as you know, the National Committee for Environmental Planning and Coordination. She has taken a personal interest in this matter, and indeed the Project Tiger would not have become a reality had it not been for the personal interest and intervention of the prime minister at every stage in order to see that it was brought forward to its present stage.

Environmental values are not something new in India. From the very dawn of our civilization there has been an awareness of this. I was going through some of the *Vedas* the other day and I came across a very beautiful passage in the *Atharva Veda*:

यत् ते भूमे विखनानि क्षिप्रं तदपि रोहतु,  
मा ते मर्म विमृग्वरी मा ते हृदयमोपपम् ।

(Whatever I take from the earth may that have quick growth again. O Purifier, may we not injure thy vitals or thy heart)

This was 5,000 years ago when our culture was being formed in these magnificent forests which were teeming with wildlife. It is remarkable that the people at that age realized that the earth's resources were not something which could be damaged at will, and that anything taken out of the earth had again in some way or other to be put back into it.



This is the broad background against which Project Tiger is being launched. I do not think it necessary for me to go into details of what exactly the project is, because by now it is wellknown. I would only like to say that the tiger, as we see it, is a symbol of the entire ecological problem in this country. This is something which needs to be reiterated. Of course, many people understand this clearly. But there may be some who may wonder as to why in a nation, where millions are still living well below the level required for decent human existence not sure of even one square meal a day far less two, such a lot of money should be spent on preserving the tiger.

I know conservationists get very irritated and indignant when this is asked. But it is a question which we have got to face and which we have to answer. I do not think there is any point in trying to evade it. And the answer is very clear and very important. If a situation arises in any country where wildlife cannot exist any longer, a situation will ultimately also arise when human beings also cannot exist any longer, because human beings also partake ultimately of the same ecological atmosphere and support required by wildlife. Unless these values of wildlife preservation are really understood by everybody, all our plans will not succeed. That is why I want to make this appeal to our friends from the press to be kind enough to stress this point that what we are doing is to try and preserve some areas in this country so that generations yet unborn can take advantage of these beautiful surroundings.

Apart from the fact that the tiger is our national animal and is gravely endangered, wildlife is an indicator

of environmental quality. There is also the educational importance of wildlife. There are many children now who have grown up in metropolitan areas and have never seen any of these beautiful animals. Can you imagine how impoverished our future generations are going to be if the only animals they will ever see will be in zoos behind bars? The scientific importance has also been mentioned which concerns research into the behaviour of these species and into the entire balance of the natural system. And then there is the aesthetic and artistic importance. Particularly in this modern age, when life is becoming increasingly hectic, when people have less and less time to relax and unwind, if we have at least a few oases of wildlife in this country it will be of incalculable value for future generations.

I would like also to add that Project Tiger must be considered in coordination with the Wildlife Tourism Project we are launching in the Fifth Plan. There has already been some activity about it in the Fourth Plan, but in the Fifth Plan we are launching a special Wildlife Tourism Project which we hope is going to involve 50 million rupees. This is going to cover not only the tourism requirements in the nine tiger sanctuaries, but also many other areas. For example, Kaziranga, where the great one-horned rhinoceros live; Periyar, the magnificent sanctuary in the south; Dachigam up in Kashmir which is the home of the last surviving Kashmir hangul, that magnificent stag which is on the verge of extinction. It will cover Sariska, Bharatpur, and various bird sanctuaries. It will also, we hope, establish three entirely new national parks in this country—a mountain national park, a desert national



park, and a marine national park. So, Project Tiger with 40 million rupees and Project Wildlife Tourism with 50 million rupees between them represent the effort in the central sector for wildlife preservation and presentation during the Fifth Plan period. In addition to this the state governments also will in their own plans look into those areas which we have not been able to cover.

Some friends have come to me and asked why we are choosing only nine areas and leaving out dozens of other areas. That is true, but we have to function within the limitations of our resources. The choice before us was either to spread out the money in tiny penny packets to cover, let us say 50 areas, or to concentrate upon nine areas and spend more money there. I think we were correct in our decision. If we have to do something let us do properly rather than doing it for the sake of saying we have done something, and then not being able to make any impact. But we do hope the state governments will also provide funds to look after some of the other important areas we have not been able to cover.

I must make the important point that the cooperation of the state governments is absolutely essential in the success of our project. It is true that Project Tiger will be centrally sponsored, the finances will be met from the centre, and its officers will be directly under the control of the Government of India. But that is not the point. Unless the state governments are fully involved and committed, it is simply not possible for us sitting in our offices in New Delhi to expect any impact. For example, the administration of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, which was passed by Parliament in 1972, is entirely



the responsibility of state governments. They are the ones who have to face the pressure and there are genuine problems which we sometimes tend to overlook. We must appreciate their difficulties also. They have to deal with the actual people who are living in the areas, whether they are *adivasis* or other villagers. They have got to deal with the day-to-day human problems involved. But I do feel that the state governments are gradually becoming more and more wildlife-oriented, and the response we have had so far from them on Project Tiger has been very encouraging. I am hopeful that their full and unstinted cooperation will be available to us in the administration of this project.

The World Wildlife Fund is participating in a big way. Of course this project is essentially an Indian project, but almost 20 per cent of the resources are going to be raised in foreign exchange by the World Wildlife Fund. We welcome this, not only because of the money involved but because of the international interest this will create. After all, when each nation preserves its own heritage, in a way it is doing so for mankind. Science and technology are developing in a way in which these political barriers will necessarily have to break down by the end of the century. I am one of those who is convinced that the very compulsion of events is such that by the year 2000 the political system in the world is going to be very different from what it is today. We may still have the nations and we may still have individual sovereignty, but if mankind is to survive at all it will have to work in much closer coordination than it does at present. And I like to look upon Project Tiger as a symbol, as it were, as an

advance action of this international cooperation which is going to become so important in the years and decades ahead.

All over the world today people are interested in this project because the World Wildlife Fund is raising resources for it. So, the tiger today has become not only a symbol for India, our national animal and our pride, but it has become a symbol of the entire world's interest in wildlife preservation and environmental quality.

## Wildlife in Kenya

The whole concept of wildlife in East Africa is different from what it is in India. In India, wildlife is something distant, elusive, rarely seen; a shadowy form moving through thick forests, hardly ever visible for more than a fraction of a second. In East Africa, it is very much part of the natural environment, visible in large numbers even on the main national highways and, of course, prolific in the magnificent national parks.

This difference was brought home very clearly to me on a recent four-day visit to Kenya, during which I went to three national parks and one game reserve. I have never seen such a large variety of animals, and it became quite clear to me that if wildlife tourism is to develop in India we will have to take much more active steps than we have done so far. Of course there is a basic difference in the vegetation of East Africa as compared with India. Our forests are thick and luxuriant and even if the animals are there it is extremely difficult



to see them. In Kenya, on the other hand, the countryside is mostly scrub, with bushes and small clusters of trees quite unlike the Indian jungle. This makes game viewing much easier than in India, and the East Africans have used this advantage with great intelligence. Today, East African tourism (Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania) revolves almost entirely around wildlife.

In a way the most remarkable of the parks that I visited was the Nairobi national park, which is virtually in the very city of Nairobi. It is extraordinary how such a park where thousands of animals roam around freely has been established so close to a national capital and an international airport. We went around the park in a landrover, and in a space of just over two hours I saw as many as sixteen different species of animals including cheetah, rhinoceros, giraffe, zebra, eland, wildebeeste, hartebeeste, and a variety of gazelles. The giraffes are perhaps the most improbable of all the African creatures. Their size and shape is extraordinary enough, but most striking are their faces with long curving eye-lashes which give them the air of having just returned from a beauty parlour. There were also a number of interesting birds, the most dramatic of which were the huge ostrich which look from a distance like moving trees. While the females are grey, the males have a magnificent dark plumage which made them so vulnerable to feminine vanity through the ages. An excellent arrangement in this park was the electronic intercommunication between landrovers and vehicles belonging to the park authorities stationed in various parts of the park. This enables game to be easily located so that the tourist can be guided to it without loss of

time, a marked contrast to the Indian parks where one has to go round and round hoping to see something with only the faintest idea of where the game actually is at any given moment.

Amboseli is a game reserve located in the area inhabited by the Masais, the legendary warriors of East Africa. The drive there on a national highway took us past several herds of wildlife. The Amboseli lodge, about four hours drive from Nairobi, consists of a central clubhouse and a number of cottages, plus a camping site where tourists live under canvas. In the evening the game-run (a drive through a park or reserve to view the game) provided us a striking view of a herd of African elephants standing against the background of the magnificent Kilimanjaro peak. Mount Kilimanjaro at 19,340 feet is the highest peak in Africa, and due to its having been a volcano its configuration is entirely different from other mountain peaks. At its top, covered with eternal snow, is a crater, and the mountain itself though located in Tanzania dominates large areas in Kenya.

In this park also we saw several rhinos, including one which was born without any ears. These archaic creatures look as if they are hangovers from a bygone age. Among the most formidable of creatures, their tank-like appearance is combined with a remarkable agility of movement and a complete lack of fear which makes them among the most formidable of opponents. A curious thing about the African parks is that the animals seem to be quite unconcerned with vehicles even if they drive to within a few yards of them. However, we were told that if anyone were foolish enough to dismount from the vehicle he would be



attacked at lightning speed. We saw a family of nine lions, including two young males, lying heaped upon each other behind a rock. Hardly one or two of them condescended to open a sleepy eye during the entire quarter of an hour that we sat and watched them from a distance of hardly twenty feet.

After a night at Amboseli we flew in a small plane to the Tsavo national park (west). The Kilaguni lodge there is constructed overlooking a long stretch of scrub with a waterhole in the foreground. Here we were treated to the extraordinary sight of a number of animals including two massive elephants sporting around within twenty yards of us while we were launching on the terrace. The game-run also provided a view of huge tuskeders standing in solitary grandeur having covered themselves with the ochre dust of the park. These elephants were standing at a distance of about a mile each, evidently surveying their respective domains. At Tsavo we also visited a remarkable pool where hippopotamus cavort and crocodiles abound. The warden told us that although herbivorous, the hippos can be very nasty customers if one comes across them unawares. They lurk in the bushes near the pools during the early hours of the morning, and have been known to viciously attack any person who comes between them and the pool. We did not see any crocodiles, which I did not regret because these nasty customers are not among my favourites.

The flight back from Kilaguni to Nairobi provided excitement of a different kind. While the rest of the party went in the two-engined plane, I thought it would be more comfortable to fly back in the single-engined plane belonging to the game warden. After half an



hour's flight over virtually deserted areas dotted occasionally by Masai herds, we found ourselves with the radio out-of-order and caught in a nasty storm. I have dealt for the last five years with landing aids, but this particular incident brought home starkly how completely cutoff one is in the air without a radio. Happily, the warden, though an amateur, was an excellent pilot and managed to bring the plane down at Nairobi without getting entangled with the heavy traffic around the airport.

The fourth park that we visited was the Aberdare national park where we spent a night at the famous Treetops Hotel. This is a remarkable structure built on stilts overlooking a large waterhole. One drives through the park to within a hundred yards of the hotel, and then has to walk up the remaining distance. On this walk people have been known to be occasionally attacked by animals, and I think it has specially been kept in order to add to the excitement of the visit. A white hunter with a loaded heavy rifle accompanies tourists from the parking area to the hotel. The hotel itself contains 30 double rooms, and can accommodate 60 tourists at a time in addition to the white hunter, the African hostess and the servants. The atmosphere in the hotel has been maintained cleverly so that one has the impression of being in jungle surroundings. Each bedroom overlooks the waterhole.

We arrived at about six in the evening. The white hunter turned out to be an old Indian army officer, Colonel Eric Hayes-Newington, who had been in the Grenadier and Rajput regiments from 1916 to 1931. He was, of course, delighted to meet tourists from India and regaled us throughout dinner with stories

and reminiscences of his army days here. It was after dinner, when we had retired to our bedroom, that the animals started appearing in front of the hotel. They did not seem to be at all disturbed by the strong flood-lighting, but continued to come and go throughout the night. At one stage there were about a hundred animals in sight including a large herd of elephants, two rhinos, innumerable wild buffaloes, a family of wart-hog and a lovely, incandescent deer which reminded one of the *swarn mriga* of the *Ramayana*. It was indeed an unusual experience to spend a night so close to these wild animals.

The cumulative impact of Kenyan wildlife is one of excitement and variety. These creatures, strange and beautiful, are an integral part of our eco-system, and their destruction in the face of increasing urbanization and industrialization throughout the world is one of the most disturbing phenomena of modern times. I went to Kenya directly from Stockholm after attending the first United Nations Conference on the Human Environment. At that conference the Indian delegation had the privilege of introducing a new principle with regard to wildlife which did not figure in the earlier draft declaration, and which was accepted with wide acclaim. This principle, which is numbered four in the declaration, runs as follows:

Man has a special responsibility to safeguard and wisely manage the heritage of wildlife and its habitat which are now gravely imperilled by a combination of adverse factors. Nature conservation including wildlife must therefore receive importance in planning for economic development.

Man is only one of the many species which inhabits this earth, and yet he has treated it as if it were his colony to exploit as he wills. Thousands of other species have already been wiped out and hundreds of others are in danger. In our own country the magnificent Indian tiger has dropped from an estimated 40,000 at the turn of the century to barely 2,000 today. Kenya has shown that wild animals can be preserved not only for their own sake but as a source of substantial tourism earnings which in turn foster the welfare of the people. Thus with wildlife tourism we have a new symbiosis between man and beast, which should become the basis of a new drive to enrich the human environment and preserve to some extent the delicate balance of nature.











Dr Karan Singh catapulted into political life in 1949 when he was appointed Regent of Jammu and Kashmir by his father Maharaja Hari Singh. Since then he was continuously Head of the State for 18 years—as Regent from 1949 to 1952, as elected Sadar-i-Riyasat from 1952 to 1965, and as Governor from 1965 till March 1967 when he was assigned the portfolio of Tourism and Civil Aviation. He has been holding the portfolio of Health and Family Planning since November 1973.

Dr Karan Singh is also a perceptive and brilliant writer. He has published several books which include writings on political science, philosophical essays, travelogues, original poems in English, and translations of Dogra-Pahari folk songs.

*Jacket design by Aravind Teki*

ISBN 0 7069 0317 X



